The Magazine for Advanced Comic Book Collectors!

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KETPLACE

No. 51
September 1997

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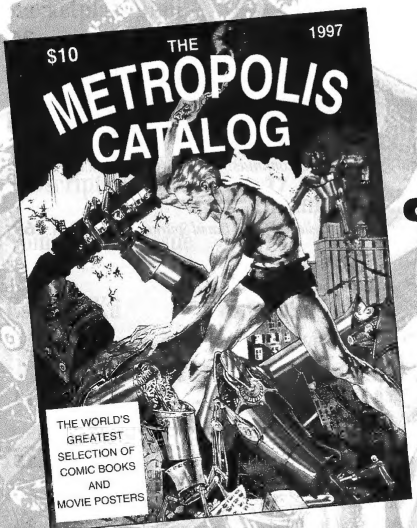

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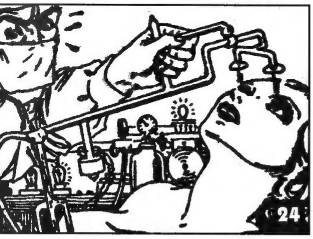

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Volume 2 • Number 51
September 1997
A Gemstone Publication

ON THE COVER:
Al Williamson's breath-taking interpretation of the Ray Bradbury classic "A Sound of Thunder" from **Weird Science-Fantasy #25** (Sep 1954).

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Mile High Madness?!

Two decades ago Bruce Hamilton called with confirmation. It was true... a new collection had been located in Colorado, by a young man named Charles Rozanski. Different from previous discoveries, this group was large. So large in fact that it seemed to have one of nearly every comic book produced from the mid-'30s to the '50s... but even more astonishing was the general condition of the material. Much of it actually seemed to be in NM and even MT condition!

Bruce had been among the first to view and purchase some of them, and our family was lucky enough to be friends with the Hamiltons. So one fateful day after buying some of the first books from this new collection, Bruce flew to San Diego with a suitcase brimming with Mile High DCs. When he arrived at the house he began (almost religiously) to lay out stack after stack on the dining room table.

We'd already been avidly collecting for about 20 years, so we were seasoned veterans of the hobby by then. We'd already looked through hundreds of basements, attics, and garages... thousands of boxes... and millions of comics. We'd followed up every tip and been disappointed countless times by phrases like "they're all perfect," but unlike the DC Golden Age we were used to... this Hamilton-selected sample of hundreds of GA books from this "Colorado collection" WAS PERFECT! The gloss... the blazing white pages... the clean corners... the perfect tight spines... this is what old comics must have looked like on the newsstands. I was actually living a dream I had fantasized so many times... I had been transported back to gaze upon what GA books looked liked when they were new and fresh and unassaulted by the usual ravages of age. We just sat there in silence... taking it all in... absorbing the moment... yet not realizing we were looking at comic book collecting history.

A few days passed and, at Bruce's suggestion, my brother and I decided to call Mr. Rozanski ourselves. Pleasant and personable, he invited us to fly out and see even more... so we did. Upon arrival, he took us to his local bank, straight into the safety deposit vault, and gingerly presented a pile of his "special favorites" for us to view. There in that Colorado vault spread out before us was the Mile High *Daring Mystery* run, *Superman* #14, and last but not least... *Action Comics* #1-10! As we gasped at the condition, we couldn't have dreamed that these gems and the hundreds we'd already purchased were just the tip of the proverbial iceberg!

Then we drove to Chuck's house and made our way down the steps into the basement. As we descended, we could see tables with row upon row of countless white boxes, each protecting neatly alphabetized titles. It was to be one of the most memorable and amazing days of my entire life.

The very next week Chuck's first Mile High ad hit the pages of *CBG* and all the controversy started. Chuck had set a new precedent by asking multiples of *Guide*, and a number of collectors and dealers were incensed by the idea. That's when the verbal abuse and the hate calls started. For about two years after our purchases, a number of "experts" from around the country attacked (both verbally at conventions and in the pages of fanzines) the Mile High collection and any who wanted books from it. They'd also call me with angry complaints about Chuck's double and triple-*Guide* prices. But they were most angry with my brother and I for being among the growing group that were willingly paying the over-book prices. "You're ruining the market and the hobby" one adamant east-coaster proclaimed. "It'll be the fault of collectors like you when this hobby goes down in the next few years! This is the end of comic book collecting! The prices you're paying are sheer madness!"

But it wasn't the end of collecting... it was the beginning of a major change in the way we viewed comics and their values. In the realms of pricing and rarity, the Mile High collection changed everything! By the 1980s, the economics of the entire hobby had been forever transformed by the discovery of this single collection.

As a collector, I too was transformed... for the first time I felt as if I knew how to grade accurately. Up until then, few had ever seen perfectly preserved 1930's and '40's material. With the addition of the Mile High books to the grading equation, I now had a point of comparison and (finally) an accurate grading model.

So on this 20th anniversary of the discovery of the Mile High collection, allow me to publicly thank Chuck Rozanski and Bruce Hamilton for being the first to bring these wonderful books into my life. But most of all, I want to salute the late Edgar Church, the pioneering collector who originally amassed the most famous and influential treasure in the history of comic book collecting... The Mile High Collection!

Best, Gary M. Carter

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

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Any reason for the CCA?

Have about ten issues or so of your CBM and I was wondering if you had ever questioned the implied existence of the Comics Code Authority (CCA). Back in the late '50s the stamp of the CCA was always clearly visible on the front cover. Now it seems you have to search the book thoroughly before you can find this "insignificant" insignia. I'd assume most people disregard it altogether! Then there's the suggestion that the CCA doesn't set the same standards it did in the '50s. (No surprise there!) I personally feel there's no reason to have the CCA anymore, since the standards seem to stretch just a little every time a new comic is published. Any thoughts?

Chris Dunn, Maryland

Although space does not permit a thorough discussion of this topic here, I do feel that the role of the CCA has certainly changed. I wonder what other CBM readers think?

Bat-space-Lash

I enjoyed John Coates' interview with Nick Cardy in CBM #48. Here is an artist whose work spans both the Golden and Silver Age of comics and needs to have some sort of major retrospective done of his work. All one has to do is look at the cover reproductions you included to see how varied and attractive his styles were during those different periods of time. Like the interview with Russ Heath in CBM #47, it left me wanting more.

Interviews and transcriptions of them can be tricky beasts, but there was a lapse in the proofreading–a character's name being printed as "Batlash" in the transcript of Cardy's interview. That name was actually Bat Lash, drawn by Cardy in one issue of Showcase, and seven issues of his own comic book during an especially creative period at DC Comics in the late '60s. The cover you chose to reproduce from that series, #2, was one of the better covers from any comic book company during that period, in my opinion. It's no wonder that Cardy became the DC cover artist for a period of time; his sense of design, dynamic drawing and bold inking enhanced any comic book.

Par Holman, Utah

Dead On

First, I would like to compliment both yourself and the wonderful writers whose contributions have made CBM the marvelous magazine that it has become.

The standards that you set for the magazine are so high that I'm amazed you are able to exceed them with every subsequent issue. Although I don't collect Golden Age books, CBM allows me to vicariously enjoy the pleasure of these treasures every month.

I noticed that with issue #44 of CBM, the cover banner changed from "The magazine for Golden Age and Silver Age Collectors" to "The magazine for Advanced Comic Book Collectors." This is a more appropriate title for CBM as it now includes collectors of Bronze Age comic books.

Whilst I clearly realize that the main thrust of the magazine is Golden and Silver Age books, I can't help but notice that many Bronze Age books have now passed the rule of "25 years." This combined with their recently discovered scarcity has made them extremely collectible. Also, Bronze Age books are featured prominently in the Matt Schiffman Report, and I might add that Matt is always dead on with his reports (he certainly has his finger on the pulse of the market).

Check out Gemstone's Website at:
www.gemstonepub.com

And please note CBM's new E-mail address:
cbm@gemstonepub.com

Would it be possible to expand the scope of CBM to include a Bronze Age article in every issue? Think of the great books that could be covered. For example, Weird War Tales, DC 100 Page Super Spectacular, DC Super Giants, Rima the Jungle Girl, New Gods, Forever People, Tomb of Dracula, Monster of Frankenstein and my personal favorite: Weird Mystery Tales. Well the possibilities are nearly endless.

In CBM #48 I noticed a letter from Raul Wrona of Ontario. I mentioned this to the salesman of Dragon Lady Comics, Queen St., Toronto, and learned that not only is Raul a patron, but so is Bill Barber whose letters have also appeared in CBM. It would appear that the Dragon Lady has become a Toronto Mecca for serious comic book collectors.

I'll close with the answer to the question that I posed in my letter in CBM #46. The issue of Amazing Spider-Man that contains only one drawing of Spider-Man is issue #279, see page four.

John R. Stuart, Ontario, Canada

CBM For Westerns Fans?

I buy your magazine, Comic Book Marketplace, every month and I really enjoy reading it. I have loved comic books ever since I was a boy back in the forties, although I didn't become a serious collector until 1969. I don't collect any new books, they hold no interest for me. Most of my collection consists of books from 1940 to the mid seventies. My favorite books are westerns, especially with photo covers.

My main reason for writing is to suggest that you devote an issue of CBM to us western fans. Most, or all of your books have covers and articles on superheroes, war or weird comics. I would like to know about rare or scarce western books.

I have Gene Autry (Fawcett) #1-10, and Whip Wilson #9, 10, 11. Are they as rare as some collectors and dealers say they are? Also in issue #22 of the Annual Overstreet Price Guide, you will notice, Wild Bill Hickock and Jingles (#75, 76 exists?) in issue #23 of the Guide, #75 has been found because it has been in my collection for quite some time. Does anyone know if #76 exists? What other western comics are hard to find? Does anyone know? Some of those western comics had great artists and writers work on them too. So how about an issue on westerns?

John Butt, Newfoundland, Canada

(Continued on page 8)

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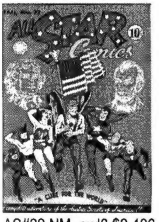

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FL#42 VF+ owl8 $1,155

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DET#102 VF owl9 $725

DET#109 VF- owl8 $700

DET#124 VF+ owl8 $700

BAT#40 VF- owl8 $850

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SUB#12 NM owl8 $2,100

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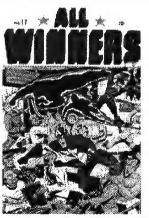

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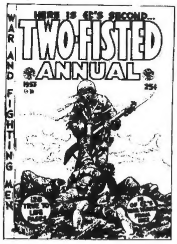

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MARKETPLACE MAIL

I've been considering doing a CBM devoted to westerns but have been unable to get enough collectors to write enough to support such an issue. Perhaps you could help? Give me a call at (619) 437-1996 and perhaps we can work something out. I collect DC, ACG, and Atlas westerns myself, and feel they are yet another underrated and underexplored part of comic history. Here's my take on your excellent research questions. I know the Fawcett Gene Autry #1-10 are tough, plus the #1 is in especially high demand these days. The Whip Wilson #9, 10, and 11 are truly scarce books. I've never seen the Wild Bill Hickock and Jingles #75 or 76, and I believe their existence is suspect.

First Appearance?

Want to compliment you on the best magazine about our hobby ever published, Comic Book Marketplace. I read it from cover to cover as soon as I retrieve it from my mailbox every month. Please note that I have a few questions that only you and your staff can probably answer. I also want to point out a few corrections to Overstreet that maybe you can confirm.

1. I am the proud owner of Heroic Comics #11, dated March 1942 (in VF/NM if I might add). On the inside front cover, is the first page of Music Master, which is advertised to begin in the next issue (#12) in an 8 page story by Bill Everett. Because it is the first page of the actual story and Music Master appears in two of the three panels, does Heroic Comics #11 constitute the first (cameo) appearance of Music Master?

2. The annual Overstreet lists an obscure short-lived satire B&W magazine, Trash, as only having issues #1 and #2. I have #4, dated October 1978, which is an 84 page special. Did this series end at #4?

3. Overstreet also lists Sick magazine as ending the series with #131, which is a special; I have #134, which is also a special, dated Fall 1980. I have almost a complete run and I am curious if this series ran longer than previously documented?

4. I own a comic called Mutineers #26, which I identified in the Gerber Photo Journal as having the cover to Buccaneers #23; since this is probably a Canadian reprint, and assuming that the interior stories are the same as Buccaneers #23, why does the statement of ownership (copy enclosed) say October 1, 1949 and notarized as of September 27, 1949. According to Gerber,

Buccaneers #23 is dated September, 1950; how can the reprint be dated prior to the original U.S. version? The only solution I can think of is that the interior pages and the statement of ownership are actually of the first issue of Buccaneers (#19) dated January, 1950. I enclosed a copy of the cover and first page. Can you confirm this please?

(5) I also have a few requests/suggestions for future issues of CBM: please run an article on 1970's (Bronze Age) comics and their relative scarcity or availability. In CBM #46, Matt Schiffman reported a sale of Larry Harmon's Laurel & Hardy, a 1972 DC one shot, for $22 in VG. Overstreet has the book listed in NM for $4. I also saw a want ad for Super DC Giant #17 & #21 (1970's Romance) willing to pay ten times Guide for them (Guide is $10 each). Are these exceptions or are certain 1970's DC books severely undervalued?

(6) Also, I would like to see an article on B&W magazines published by Skywald, i.e., Scream, Nightmare and Psycho. These magazines had great art (Wrightson, J. Jones, Kaluta, etc.) and good stories but you never hear them mentioned along with the great Warrens, Creepy, Eerie, etc. An example is John Byrne's first published art was a two page story in Nightmare #20.

Keep up the great work.

Nick Katradis, New Jersey

Whew… just a few really tough questions, Nick!! (1) I don't feel that it does constitute the first appearance of Music Master because it is technically an ad. This is an area of great controversy among collectors. Is Superman's first appearance the ad for Action #1 in More Fun or Adventure? Is Spectre's first appearance the one panel ad at the end of the Buccaneer story in More Fun #51? The examples of ads predating first appearances and first stories is endless. On the other hand, some very respectable historians argue that, ad or not, these ARE the first time an image of the character is seen in print by the public and should constitute a first appearance, technicality or not! (2) My sources say Trash Magazine ended with #4. (3) I didn't know that Sick Magazine lasted until Fall of 1980! Thanks for the data! (4) I cannot confirm (or deny) your Mutineers hypothesis, and I've never heard of the Canadian publishing date anomaly you mention. Maybe a CBM reader who collects Canadian books can help. (5) There are exceptions… and certain 1970's DC books are severely undervalued, especially DC romance giants. (6) You write it… we'll publish it! Congrats on some great discoveries, some provocative questions, and some great info! Whew!

20% of Guide

Just wanted you to know how much I have been enjoying each issue of the new and improved Comic Book Marketplace. I have gotten back into dealing with a large volume of Golden and Silver Age collections. CBM certainly enhances my understanding and enjoyment of this material. I am recommending it as a "must read" for all Golden and Silver Age fans.

When it comes to dealing in this type of material, it seems that collectors are willing to shell out the cash for either a rare item, or high grade (VF to NM). High grade itself making an otherwise common book rare. Unfortunately, this trend makes only about 1 out of 100 Silver Age books really desirable. If a dealer wants to sell most low grade '60s books, he better buy them cheap and half price 'em.

The difficulty is in telling the seller that you can only give him 20% of Guide for his low or medium grade Silver Age books. Most sellers think that you are trying to pull a fast one. They don't sell. I expect to see this trend of high price and high demand for high grade, and low prices and low demand for low grades continue. At the last Wonder Con, most of the Silver Age books we sold were in VF to NM. The problem comes, of course in replacing these items.

Despite these challenges, I am having a blast dealing in old comics. I am looking at a great collection of 3,000 Golden Age books this week. We can't keep good Golden Age books in stock in any grade. I think it helps that I am a strict grader. The more strict a grader you are, the more luck you will have in moving the already difficult to move lower grades.

Lee M. Hester, California

More Alan Light Info

In CBM #48, letter-writer Mike Roberts mentioned that a previous letter-writer named Bill Barber was looking for some information on Alan Light's Flashback Reprint series from the mid-seventies. As a collector of older fanzines and fan-published projects, I have most of those as well as Alan's 1974 and 1975 DynaPubs catalogues. While my information may not be complete, it will hopefully give Bill a good starting point.

Flashback Series One: #1 Wood and EC (c. '71 Wm. M. Gaines); #2 Human Torch #5 (reprinted around '71); both volumes in this series have B&W covers as well as interiors.

Flashback Series Two: #1 Daredevil Battles Hitler #1; #2 Special Edition Comics #1 (Captain Marvel); #3 U.S.A. Comics #1; #4 Special Comics #1 (Hangman #1); #5 Military Comics #1; #6 All Star Comics #4; #7 Pep Comics #1; #8 Young Allies Comics #1; #9 The Doll Man Quarterly #1; #10 Captain Marvel *Continued on page 75*

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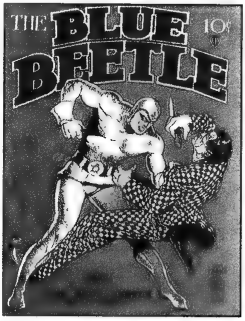

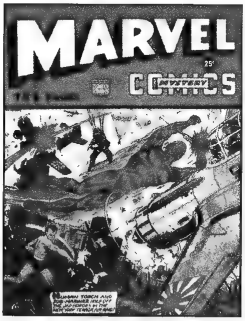

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Batman	#2 VG+ (App.) (Restored by Mat Wilson)	$1,800.00
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Danger Trail	#3 VG+	$400.00
Marvel Comics	#15 Fair (Missing CenterFold)	$150.00
Hangman Comics	#4 G+	$175.00
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Action Comics	#34 G	$ 90.00
Superman	#2 VG-	$1,700.00
Marvel Mystery Comics Ann.	#1 Fair (Xerox last page)	$2,500.00
Captain America	#8 Fine	$1,750.00
All New Comics	#14 Fine	$70.00
All Star Comics	#20 VG-	$200.00
4 Most Comics	#3 VG	$60.00
Ghostly Weird Stories	#121 G	$20.00
Incredible Science Fiction	#31 Fair	$10.00
More Fun Comics	#79 Fair	$100.00
Top - Notch Comics	#5 G	$100.00
Worlds Finest Comics	#32 Poor	$20.00
Amazing Fantasy	#15 Fair	$700.00
Fantastic Four	#13 VG	$30.00
Showcase Comics	#7 G-	$85.00
Flash Comics	#123 VG+	$170.00
Silver Surfer	#1 VG	$50.00
Silver Surfer	#2 Fine	$30.00
Doctor Strange	#169 NM+	$200.00
House of Secrets	#92 Fine (Auto.)	$150.00
Astro Boy	#1 G+	$60.00
Astro Boy	#1 VG+	$120.00
Astro Boy	#1 Fine	$150.00
Milton the Monster	#1 NM- (File Copy)	$70.00
Young Love	#110 VF-	$10.00
Superman	#278 Fine	$10.00
Unexpected	#157 Fine+	$12.00
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Mars Attacks Wrapper	EX.	$750.00

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Weird One-Shots!

By Pat S. Calhoun

The science fiction and horror genres both enjoyed peak sales in the comic book boom years of the early 1950s. During this four-color heyday over a billion comic books per year were being printed to satisfy an audience that included over 90% of the children and over 50% of the adults in the country. During the boom years the fantasy genres claimed over 20% of the market–enough to make them the dominant theme on the newsstand racks. So during these years, along with success stories like DC's *Strange Adventures* and ACG's *Adventures Into The Unknown*, there a number of weird one-shots were also produced, and rather than enduring for decades, they expired after their first and only issue.

Mysterious Traveler #1 (November 1948) was a tie-in to the popular radio show on the Mutual Broadcasting Network where a spooky host introduced spooky stories. The old radio shows pumped a lot of wonder across the airwaves, and the tradition of a colorful character delivering forwards and afterwards to the various tales and episodes goes back to Scheherazade. The publishing "boom" was underway by late 1948; once the postwar marketplace made paper abundant things started happening: new publishers began producing comics, and the old mainstays added new titles to their output.

The first yarn, the cover-blurbed "Five Miles Down," has the "Traveler" telling us about the construction of a most ambitious mine shaft. The monsters they meet in a giant cave five miles below the surface are horrifying enough, but the story doesn't really add up to much. It took "short story" comics a few years to perfect the form. The art is smooth enough to help the awkward narrative along; it's by veteran Bob Powell who also provided the cover.

The second story is the one (and only) installment of "Mysterious Traveler's Classic Tales of Terror." Adapted into "picture-story" form for the first time since its original publication in 1843 is Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." This perfect little parable of psychological suspense–as the murderer imagines he hears his victim's heart still beating under the floorboards of the room where he has concealed the corpse-makes a good "picture-story" and would sound super-spooky on the radio!

Next up is an adaptation of a recent (1948) movie release, "Raw Deal," starring Dennis O'Keefe, Claire Trevor, and Raymond Burr. It's a feature-length crime revenge film compressed tightly down to eight pages of comics. It's compelling enough and certainly fast-paced, again, aided and abetted by Bob Powell art.

The last feature is a Mysterious Traveler trip to India, that's merely a recounting of popular legends like the monks who lie on beds of nails, snake-charmers, rope climbers, etc. It is pure filler, padding out a nonetheless pretty cool book–one of the very first "horror" comics. The publisher was Trans-World, probably a subsidiary of Street and Smith. A decade after this, Charlton started their series using the Mysterious Traveler as a fantasy host, since Shelly Moldoff's great character Dr. Death had to be retired when the Comics Code came along in late 1954.

Rocket Ship X #1 (September 1951) is an off-the-wall entry from Fox that delivers a solid dose of pure grade-B 1950's science fiction. This first story, "Out of This World," is an action-packed ten-page space opera about a mad scientist who starts up a colony on Mars as a base from which to conquer Earth. There is an abundance of sci-fi "hardware," like ray guns and anti-gravity metals, as well as some nicely exotic Martian flora and fauna, that provide enough minor amusements along the way so that the lukewarm climax isn't a big letdown. The art is grade-B, but it's honest and executes all the SF paraphernalia adequately even if unspectacularly.

"The Ivy Invasion" features plants that atomic radiation has mutated into giant carnivorous monsters. It's a nifty concept, but the resolution thereof is less than masterful melodrama. Art,, again rates a "B," but definitely gets the job done.

The third and final yarn, "Robot Rebellion," is a complex time travel story. The first time voyage, aiming for the end of the Civil War in 1865, instead goes 85 years (from 1950) into the future, to 2035. The travelers, a young man and woman, find they have arrived just in time to be whisked off to the moon–drafted into the raging robot-human war. They soon retreat to Earth, but there, the Earth-robots are also revolting and exterminating their former masters. The man writes this sad tale and puts it in his message cylinder, which does get back to 1950–clutched in a robot arm that makes the narrative inside all the more chilling and believable. Needless to say, "the art is grade B."

Rocket Ship X #1 (Sep 1951) Although the cover seems to imply that the book is about "Rocket Ship X," inside it's an anthology of self-contained SF stories.

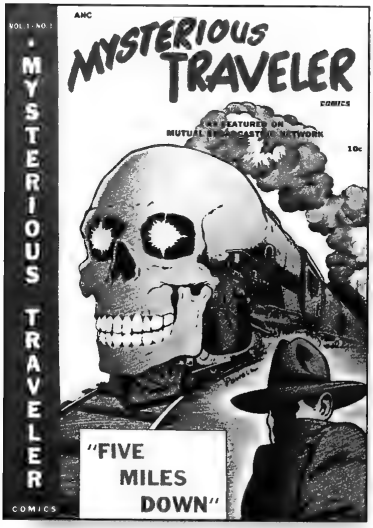
There's a two-page filler feature at the end, "Our Atomic Future," that is charming in its naïveté, but seems to be more the result of a desperate need to fill pages rather than a deep belief in nuclear utopia.

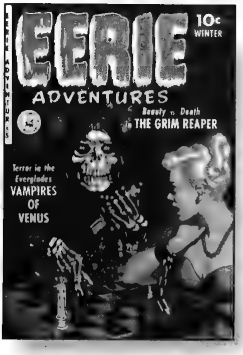
Eerie Adventures #1 (Winter 1951) from Ziff-Davis features the ultimate "chess" cover with Death backing up the move that checkmates his chained opponent by withdrawing a wicked knife from his cloak. This comic also contains a couple of stories with art by the prolific Bob Powell, including the opener, "The Vampires From Venus." A flying saucer from Venus crash-lands on Earth, and the humanoid survivor begins to grow bloodsucking plants in the Florida Everglades. We've seen this story a thousand times before, but it's still mildly satisfying.

"The Grim Reaper" doesn't exactly break new ground in the "Chess Game with Death" subgenre, but this version is lean and mean with clean art by Al Carreno. "The Perfect Hideout" has a ludicrous plot: crook breaks in on scientist testing fourth dimension machine; crook kills scientist and turns machine on himself–only to find that the 4th-D is a one-way trip to Hell, where crook meets Satan, who drops some broad hints that the forthcoming eternity is not a pleasant prospect. The art on this story has an intriguing, elaborately scratchy style.

"Deadline For Death" uses another plot that the pre-Code publishers put a lot of miles on. Crook/murderer on the lam meets (and murders!) mysterious old man who haunts him-talking about a day of reckoning that's drawing near... It's very readable and very forgettable, with moody art by Powell. As a bonus the back cover offers an "Eerie" scene illustrated by Bernie Krigstein. According to *Overstreet's Guide*, Avon told Ziff-Davis that they thought *Eerie Adventures* infringed on the Eerie title they'd been running since early 1951; so this one-shot died a political death.

Although none of these aforementioned weird one-shots won a second issue for their titles, they are all worthwhile books and demonstrate the diversity of the comic book marketplace at its zenith. ■





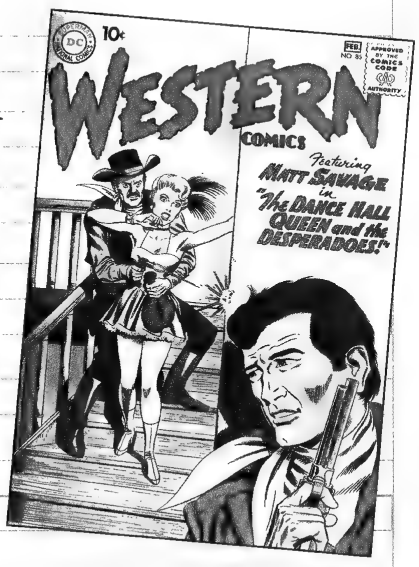
Eerie Adventures #1 (Win 1951) This superb "fatal checkmate" cover painting is the highlight of the issue, an unsurpassable interpretation of the "chess game with Death."

Mysterious Traveler #1 (Nov 1948) The Traveler's face is in shadow as the skull train rounds the bend... Bob Powell's art added another dimension to the radio "terror tale" host.

DC's Forgotten Forty-Four!

DC Comics Entered A Time Warp with some of its 1960-61 issues!

By Michelle Nolan



THE END OF THE TRAIL... Matt Savage, Trail Boss, made his last original appearance in the final issue of Western Comics, #85 (Jan/Feb 1961), in a story entitled "The Dance Hall Queen and the Desperadoes."

Let's assume you're a DC Comics fan. Did you know one of your favorite companies published 1950's comics in the early 1960s? No, we're not going to get metaphysical here. But it is true that at the dawn of the Silver Age, DC was still publishing a few titles that had a lot more to do with comics of the previous decade.

Just try to locate them now. It's not easy finding the "Forgotten 44" issues from DC!

The "Forgotten 44"? I can just hear you now, mumbling something like, "I knew it, she's finally gone over the top! She's run out of column ideas!"

Well, folks, there's no end to topics from the world of Golden and Silver Age comics. But, seriously, there really is a "Forgotten 44," as I dub the final few issues of 11 DC titles that died in the 1960-61 era, just when so many great Silver Age titles were beginning long, glorious runs.

We'll get to their identities in just a moment. I would bet good money (or at least bad comics) that you have never seen a lot of these issues, even if you are a DC collector. (Or, if you wish, you can sneak a peek at the chart!)

First, though, a comment about the origins of the Silver Age. Most fans (including Ye Editor) date it from *Showcase* #4 in 1956 (the origin of The Flash). Some insist the Silver Age began with *Detective* #225 in 1955 (origin of the Martian Manhunter, whom some claim should be called the first Silver Age hero and not the last Golden Age hero). A few say the Silver Age started with *Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane* #1 in 1958. You can make a case for that, because that title was the first new superhero comic DC began since *Superboy* #1 nearly a decade earlier.

For me, though, the Silver Age began early in 1959, when *The Flash* #105 (continuing the numbering from the last issue of *Flash Comics*) first hit the stands on January 5, 1959. That's the date inscribed on the copy I bought the day it hit the drugstore newsstand at Cedar Tree Plaza in Santa Clara, California, along with the then-perceptive comment in my fifth grade scrawl, "First Flash issued in ten years!" (That, by the way, was the only new comic book DC started in 1959!)

The other landmarks of my personal Silver Age soon followed during that unforgettable year–the debut of Supergirl in Action #252, the beginning of the Adam Strange series in *Mystery in Space* with #53, and the debut of DC's second Green Lantern in *Showcase* #22.

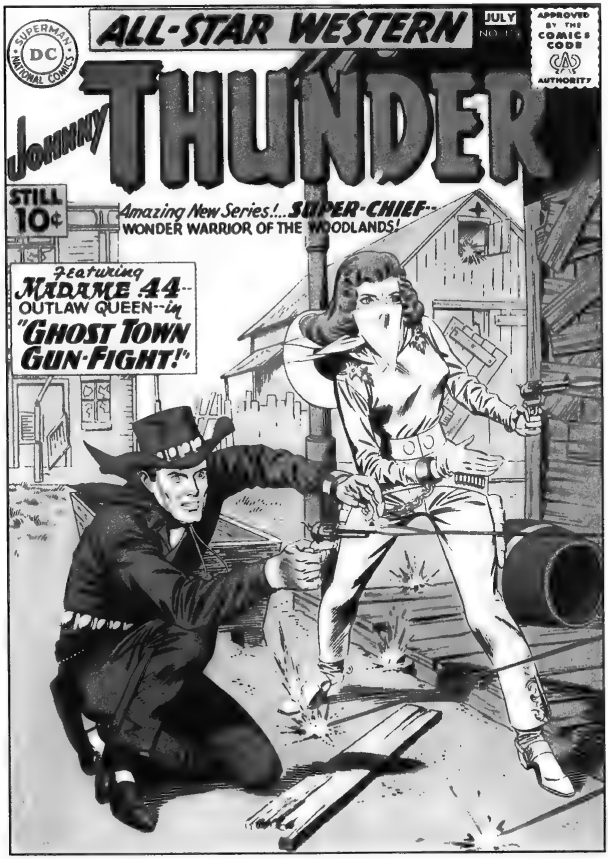
With so many new characters and new titles beginning, oth-

THE LAST SHOOTOUT... All-Star Western #119 (Jun/Jul 1961), the last issue, featured a wonderful Madame .44 appearance along with the hero whose identity she tried to uncover, Johnny Thunder.

ers were doomed, since DC was not an open-ended company and seldom operated with more than 40 titles at one time. Indeed, the superheroes of the Silver Age were strictly commercial creations, invented (or re-invented) to replace fading titles.

It's these doomed titles that make up DC's "Forgotten 44" issues, since all of these titles were on their last legs and were doubtless failing to sell well. The statement of ownership in *All-Star Western* #117 (March 1961)–one of the "Forgotten 44" issues–states the previous year's average circulation was 154,000, so you can see that what would now be considered great circulation figures would have been grounds for cancellation back then. The "Forgotten 44" stand in stark contrast to most DC titles of the 1959-61 era, which either became models of stability or continued to be so in a comic book market that otherwise remained in a state of considerable flux.

The "Forgotten 44" with dates in the early 1960s include two Western titles, *All-Star Western* #110-119 and *Western Comics* #79-85; three television-based titles, *Sgt. Bilko* #17-18, *Sgt. Bilko's Pvt. Doberman* #10-11 and *Pat Boone* #3-5, one teen humor title, *A Date With Judy* #74-79; and four funny animal titles, *TV Screen Cartoons* #132-138; *Three Mousketeers* #25-26; *Peter Porkchops* #62; and *Flippity & Flop* #47. In addition, there were the final three annual issues of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* #11-13, which went on sale before Christmas in 1960, 1961 and 1962. (The last *Rudolph*, the incredibly difficult to find 80-page giant issue, is the only one of the "Forgotten 44" that appeared after 1961).


ALL-STAR WESTERN
JULY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SUPERMAN DC NATIONAL COMICS
JOHNNY THUNDER
STILL 10¢
Amazing New Series!... SUPER-CHIEF... WONDER WARRIOR OF THE WOODLANDS!
Featuring MADAME 44 OUTLAW QUEEN in "GHOST TOWN GUN-FIGHT!"

Most of these issues of the "Forgotten 44" are rarely seen. How many have you seen? I had a heck of a time finding some of them, but eventually located them all.

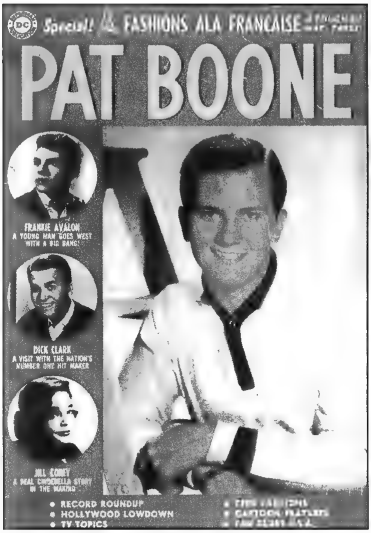
Since I collect everything DC published in the 1950s but collect more selectively from the 1960's period, I can recall asking myself if I wanted to seek these out. The answer became obvious within moments: Yes, of course!

Collecting an era in comics does not necessarily correspond to exact dates. For example, I also collect certain Dell titles up through the period in 1962 when Western Publishing's titles began appearing under the Golden Key imprint. It just seemed silly to cut off my runs of *Donald Duck* and *Uncle Scrooge* at the end of 1959. (And in the

CBM CHECKLIST

DC's "Forgotten 44" from 1960-61

All-Star Western #110-119
Western Comics #79-85
A Date with Judy #74-79
Pat Boone #3-5
Sgt. Bilko #17-18
Sgt. Bilko's Private Doberman #10-11
Three Mouseketeers #25-26
TV Screen Cartoons #142-138
Peter Porkchops #62
Flippity & Flop #47
Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer #11-13 (1960-61 issue thru 1962-63 issue)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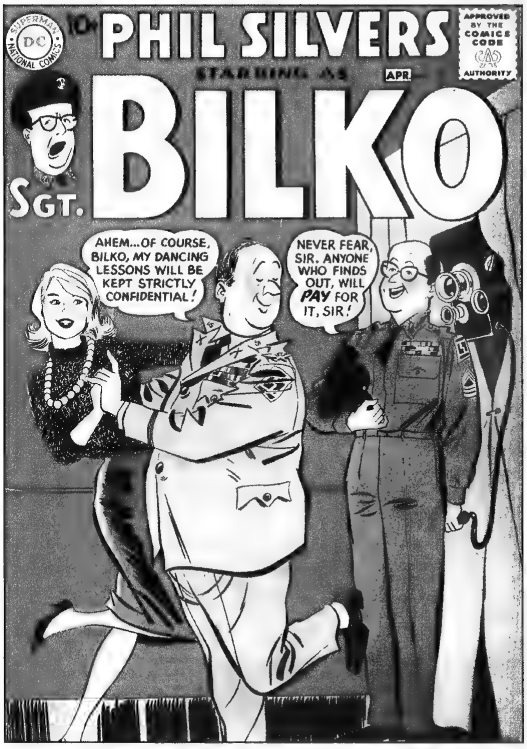
FRANKIE AVALON
A YOUNG MAN GOES WEST WITH A BIG BAND!
DICK CLARK
A VISIT WITH THE NATION'S NUMBER ONE HIT MAKER
JILL COREY
A REAL CINDERELLA STORY IN THE MAKING
• RECORD ROUNDUP
• HOLLYWOOD LOWDOWN
• TV TOPICS
• CARTOON FEATURES

FAN MAG OR COMIC BOOK? **The last issue of Pat Boone (#5, Jun 1960) shows how this was more of a teenybopper fan magazine than a comic book. Note the absence of a Comic Code Authority Stamp.**


10¢
PHIL SILVERS
STARRING AS
SGT. BILKO
APR.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
AHEM...OF COURSE, BILKO, MY DANCING LESSONS WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL!
NEVER FEAR, SIR. ANYONE WHO FINDS OUT, WILL PAY FOR IT, SIR!

THE SGT.'S LAST CAPER...

Sgt. Bilko (#18, Mar/Apr 1960) By the time this final issue appeared, the Phil Silvers character already had ended a four-year run on television. Cover art is by Bob Oskner, who did so much wonderful humor material for DC.

case of those titles, of course, most collectors want all the Barks issues through the mid-1960s.)

(Or take certain Grosset and Dunlap series books, which I also collect from the 1950s. I collect titles like *Nancy Drew, Dana Girls* and *Chip Hilton* through the last of the 1961 titles, because they were the final books to appear in dust jackets before pictorial covers replaced them.

Even though some collectors like those pictorial covers, I prefer the original format. To me, nothing can duplicate the feeling of a wonderfully illustrated dust jacket! I digress a bit, but want to hear a real horror story? At my 30th high school reunion last year, I had a nice chat with an old friend named Lorie who used to trade books with me in high school. "Yes, I still have all of my *Nancy Drews*," she said, "I even cut up all the dust jackets years ago and pasted them into the front of the book."

Needless to say, Lorie was not real happy when I told her she had destroyed 90 percent of the value of the books! Sigh! (I wasn't sure I should do that, but she asked me.) But then, she never plans to sell them, anyway.

(And if any of you good folks know of any collectors who deliberately removed the covers of their comics, I don't want to hear about it!)

At any rate, DC's "Forgotten 44" are very much a part of any 1950's collection, whether you collect only the western or humor titles or whether you want all of them. There's only the slightest hint of a nod to the Silver Age–the introduction of "Super Chief" in *All-Star Western* #117-119 and of the outlaw queen "Madame .44" in the Johnny Thunder strip in the same three issues of *All-Star Western*. Both of those "modernized" characters are interesting–Carmine Infantino did Super Chief along with Pow Wow Smith in *Western Comics*–but not one DC fan in a thousand has ever read any of their tales.

In those turbulent times for comic book titles, many fans may not realize what an absolute rock of stability DC was in 1960 and throughout most of the following decade. Perhaps the comics didn't sell as well as they did in the 1940s and '50s, but you'd never know it by the stability that DC's early 1960's roster reveals. This was not supposed to be a good time for comics, but all of DC's ongoing titles sold well in excess of 100,000. In fact, sales of less than 200,000 were grounds for consideration of cancellation (notice I said consideration of cancellation; for some reason, certain titles seem to endure forever).

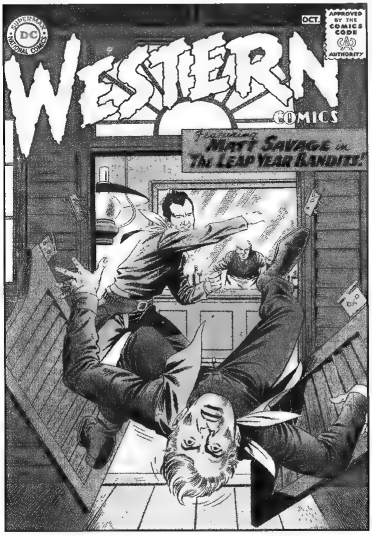
Other than titles represented by the "Forgotten 44" listed above DC published 39 titles in 1960, many of them having begun a decade or more earlier. Astonishingly, 31 of those titles ran throughout the entire 1960s!! The shortest-lived title introduced in 1960 was the television-based *Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*, which ran 26 issues through 1964 but was doomed by the first-run demise of the classic television show. Of the eight titles that were either discontinued or interrupted, *Dobie Gillis* was the first, followed by three in 1966 (*All-American Men of War, House Of Secrets* and *Mystery In Space*) and four in 1968 (*Adventures Of Bob Hope, Blackhawk, The Fox & the Crow* and *My Greatest Adventure*).

Of those 39 titles, costume and superheroes occupied 15; mystery and science fiction filled six; romance, war and humor filled five apiece, and, of course, there were the *Showcase* and *Brave & the Bold* tryout titles along with the lone genre "oddball," *Tomahawk*.

And of the ten titles DC either began or purchased from other companies in 1961-64, the only one lasting fewer than four years may have been the best of the bunch: Robert Kanigher's unusual war character *Captain Storm*, which ran eighteen issues from 1964-67.

So you can see what an anomaly the "Forgotten 44" represent for DC–the last vestiges of a much different era in comic books. It was an era when anything and everything was tried in the desperate hope of replacing the 1940's popularity of superheroes and a variety of humor, the two genres that dominated comics in their first 15 years or so of comic book existence.

NEARING THE END OF THE TRAIL when Western Comics #83 (Sep/Oct 1960) hit the stands, it was getting mighty close to the end for Matt Savage (by Gil Kane and Joe Giella), The Wyoming Kid, and the exquisitely drawn Pow Wow Smith, Indian Law Man.



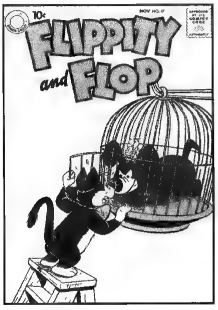
DC's *TV Screen Cartoons* (which ran #129-138 as a continuation of the long-running *Real Screen Comics*, which lasted 128 issues) was apparently merely an attempt to give the title a more up-to-date feel in the title. Ironically, of the characters represented in the "Forgotten 44," the only strip that continued to run regularly in DC comics was the wonderful *The Fox and the Crow*, which lasted until 1968 in its own title.

On the other hand, three other humor titles had their last appearances irregularly. *Three Mousketeers* #25-26 were dated August/September and October/December 1960, appearing about a year after #24 (October 1959); *Peter Porkchops* #62 was dated October/December 1960, appearing a full year after #61; and *Flippity & Flop* #47 was dated September/November 1960, also appearing a full year after #46. I have no idea why DC published these "last-gasp" issues of these three titles, other than perhaps to use up inventory material. These four issues contain no advertisements other than house ads, so that's as good a guess as any!

Unlike the rest of its titles, when DC ended a humor title in the late 1950s, such as *Dodo & the Frog* or *Buzzy*, the company often published the final issues on an irregular basis. This may have had something to do with printing press capacity or the desire to use up inventory. Who knows? But it did create a few headaches for data researchers!

As far as *A Date with Judy* is concerned for 1960, that was based on a long-running radio and a short-running television show, both of which had long since ceased to exist. The ABC TV show, in fact, was (for some reason) plugged on the covers of the comics long after its short run ended in 1953 after two years. Perhaps syndication kept it alive, though I don't recall ever seeing it. So, it was basically a case of Dobie replacing Judy, right down to the wonderful art by Bob Oskner.

The Phil Silvers Show, from which sprang the brief but immense popularity of Sgt. Bilko, ended on a first-run basis in September of 1959, perhaps catching DC by surprise, for Bilko and buddies didn't breathe their last in comics for several more months. CBS gave it a four-year run beginning in 1955 (it was originally entitled "You'll Never Get Rich," which soon became its subtitle in order to give the name of the truly commercial Phil Silvers better exposure).



Pat Boone? Now that was a strange comic! It's also the answer to a great trivia question. Of the more than 100 titles DC began in its first 30 years of existence, most fans know that *Danger Trail* (1950-51) was the first to run only five issues. The other five-issue title of the 1935-65 era…*Pat Boone*! This was more of a teenybopper hybrid title, unable to decide whether it was a comic book or a magazine. In fact, none of the five-issue run has Comic Code approval, a

CREATING HOUSEHOLD HAVOC for the last time in #47 (Sep/Nov 1960), Flippity the canary, Flop the cat, and Sam the dog make their swan song.

good argument for the "magazine" angle.

Here's something else even the most dedicated DC fans may not realize: In the 1957-64 period, DC did not start a single comic unless it was either based on a television show or the title characters' first strip appeared in *Showcase* or *Brave & the Bold*. (The only exceptions were the titles purchased from Quality when that company folded at the end of 1956 and the two romance comics bought from Crestwood-Prize in 1963.)

Unless I have miscalculated, during the 1957-64 period there was no original DC character created specifically for a first issue of his own title until *Captain Storm* appeared in 1964! In other words, to gamble with totally original characters, the way Marvel did so successfully from 1961-64, was the antithesis of the DC policy.

The saddest "Forgotten 44" title to bite the dust: *Flippity & Flop*. They were, of course, among the funniest animals in comics history and characters I dearly loved then and still do, just as I love Tweety & Sylvester. The dynamics between the birds and the cats I find amusingly irresistible!

But, to me, the saddest part of DC's 1960-61 era was the demise of the two long-running Western titles. Those are among the most underrated of all comics! The stories often had nifty plot twists and even a bit of characterization, not to mention wonderful art by the likes of Gil Kane, Carmine Infantino, and (earlier) Alex Toth.

In its last few issues, *Western Comics* featured an obviously television-influenced character–Matt Savage, Trail Boss, who debuted in #77 (October 1959)–along with the long-running Pow Wow Smith and Wyoming Kid, both of whom lasted more than ten years and also earlier appeared in DC's anthology titles.

My favorite DC western character, Johnny Thunder, was joined by Madame .44 for the last three issues of *All-Star Western*, which also featured the only appearances of Infantino's nicely rendered Super Chief.

Madame .44 was a "lady photographer" named Jeanne Walker, and she was determined to prove that schoolmaster John Tane was secretly Johnny Thunder. This series showed all kinds of promise, and it was a darned shame that it ended abruptly, even though a sequel to the story in #119 was promised. I eagerly awaited the next issue of *All-Star Western*, and I couldn't figure out why it never arrived. (In 1961, there were no fan publications or distributors' catalogs to explain why!)

This was an ironic finish to the "Forgotten 44," although I had no idea at the time. After all, 10 years earlier, fans of the Justice Society of America in the old *All-Star Comics* were left twisting in the wind after that series was followed on the newsstands by *All-Star Western* #58–the first issue!

Until next time, happy collecting! ■

Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s. In real life, Michelle works as a freelance journalist.

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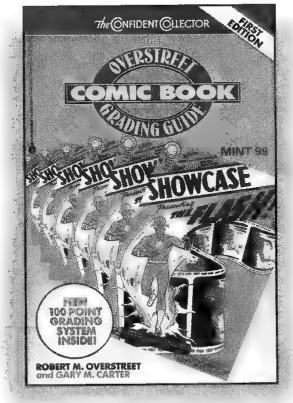

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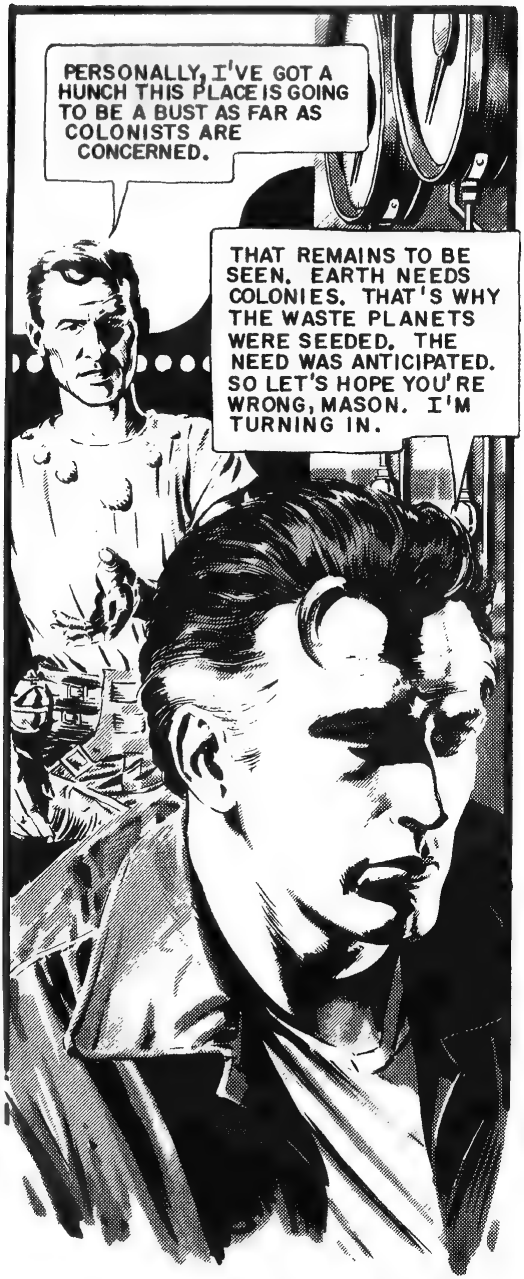
PERSONALLY, I'VE GOT A HUNCH THIS PLACE IS GOING TO BE A BUST AS FAR AS COLONISTS ARE CONCERNED.
THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN. EARTH NEEDS COLONIES. THAT'S WHY THE WASTE PLANETS WERE SEEDED. THE NEED WAS ANTICIPATED. SO LET'S HOPE YOU'RE WRONG, MASON. I'M TURNING IN.

Long before the direct sales market, even before the Comics Code, EC Comics produced some of the finest science fiction comics ever published. One of the reasons why *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* were so good was the work of a lanky young man named Al Williamson. At 21, Williamson was the youngster of the EC family, but everyone there was in awe of his draftsmanship. Williamson drew bravura SF, and it didn't hurt that he had the assistance of Frank Frazetta, Roy Krenkel, and Angelo Torres on backgrounds and inking.

After EC's demise, Williamson worked around: ACG, Charlton, Archie, Harvey, bringing to the SF, western, and mystery work he did for those companies the same superb rendering and palpable atmosphere that made his EC work so memorable. In addition to the comic book art he produced in the late 1950s and '60s, Williamson also contributed to a number of newspaper strips, including ghosting several weeks of *Flash Gordon* for Dan Barry and assisting John Prentice on *Rip Kirby*–both of those were strips created by Williamson's artistic idol and inspiration, Alex Raymond.

Indeed, Williamson went on to make Flash Gordon his "signature" character. The work for the King Features Comics' *Flash Gordon* series in the mid-'60s was followed by the astounding adaptation of the campy and "less than artistic" (some even say terrible) movie in 1980, and a two-issue Marvel mini-series in 1995.

During the late 1960s, the bulk of Al's energy went to the *Secret Agent Corrigan* strip, which he began working on in

Al Williamson Conquers the Universe!

An interview by S. C. Ringgenberg

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1967, illustrating scripts by Archie Goodwin. This team would go on to write and draw the *Star Wars* strip, which Al took over following Russ Manning's death. *Star Wars* never looked better than it did in Al Williamson's hands.

STAR WARS
written by: ARCHIE GOODWIN drawn by: A. WILLIAMSON
SOLO'S A SKILLFUL PILOT, GRIBBET, IF WE ACTUALLY HAD TO FOLLOW HIS COURSE OVER THOSE MOONS' SURFACES, HE'D HAVE ESCAPED LONG AGO!
To lose the bounty hunter Skorr, the MILLENNIUM FALCON skims debonairly across the twin moons of Ord Mantell! Uhh!
SET DOWN HERE, CHEWIE! THIS CRATER'LL HIDE US WHILE WE CHECK OUT LUKE'S THEORY!
THAT WAS MY FATHER'S LIGHTSABER, HAN... I DON'T WANT IT HARMED!
EASY, KID! I'M JUST PASSING IT UNDER THE INFRA-SCAN TO SEE IF--AH HA!
A MICRO-SIZED HOMING BEACON HIDDEN JUST INSIDE THE HANDGRIP!
SKORR PLANTED IT BEFORE SENDING THE LIGHTBLADE TO YOU AS PROOF OF CAPTURING ME!
WHEN YOU RETURNED THE SABER IT FELT WRONG TO ME, HAN! MAYBE THAT WAS THE FORCE OR MY OWN UNEASINESS BUT--
NOT QUITE...!
WHATEVER... REMOVING THE BEACON WILL SOLVE EVERYTHING!
"REMEMBER THAT IMPERIAL FLEET ON MANEUVERS IN THIS SYSTEM...? INSTRUMENTS INDICATE OUR ACTIVITY'S CAUGHT THEIR INTEREST..."
"THEY'RE MOVING THIS WAY... FAST!"
© Lucasfilm Ltd. (LFL) 1981

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With the end of the *Star Wars* newspaper strip–one of the last adventure strips–Al started a new career as a comic book inker. Too careful and meticulous (and hence, too slow) to make a living penciling, inking became Al's bread and butter. He started inking Curt Swan's Superman for DC, then moved to Marvel, where he has remained for over a decade. He has become their top inker and artistic mentor to a new generation of talent... like Rick Leonardi and John Romita, Jr. These two, along with other notable pencilers, have all benefited from Al's expertly-rendered crosshatching and rich blacks.

Williamson is still inking superhero comics for Marvel as he continues into his fifth decade of comics. And his love of drawing compels him to pencil and ink an occasional story. Williamson remains an exemplar not only for his artistic prowess, but also for being the kind of man he is, a gentleman and a class act all the way!

Gary, Pat, and I salute you, Al Williamson, as one of the true greats of comics and wish you many more years of good health and happiness. We know you will maintain the standard of excellence you have set that inspires everyone around you.

Steve Ringgenberg: *Al, what drew you to comics in the first place?*

Al Williamson: I was a kid when I discovered them... I loved them instantly. Comics were a different world than I ever knew existed. It was a world of the printed page... of adventure where you could really lose yourself and just forget reality and live the adventures of these guys and enjoy the funny stuff as well. I'd seen comics before; the newspaper had daily strips.

This is in Latin America... Bogota, Colombia. To be suddenly given these comics in Spanish, with all these different worlds... it was just like a kid seeing *Star Wars* for the first time. And when you saw them, you realized (I look back now) that they were for me, that I'd always love them. And, in fact, I still love comics.

WE CAN'T FIGHT THE IMPERIAL FLEET, HAN, AND IF WE TACKLE SKORR...
...THE FLEET SWOOPS IN AND GRABS US ANYWAY!
I KNOW, YOUR WORSHIP... BUT SITTING IN THIS CRATER TILL WE'RE NAILED ISN'T A GREAT ALTERNATIVE!
THEN LET ME SUGGEST ANOTHER ONE...
Soon, a
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Flash and Ming in a scene from "The Movie" adaptation.

Ringgenberg: *When you were a kid in Bogota, was it the* Flash Gordon *newspaper strip or the movie serial that first got you interested in Flash Gordon?*

Williamson: It was the movies that got me interested. I knew about Flash but wasn't that thrilled with it. Actually, I was into Sub-Mariner and Amazing-Man and even Batman, stuff like that, and also some of the Latin American comics with adventure stories that I liked very much. So it wasn't until I saw that they had made a movie of a comic that I got hooked; I couldn't believe it. They called it *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe*, and I was immediately taken with it and really just overwhelmed by it. It took over my life at the age of nine.

the ship of the bounty hunter Skorr...
THE HOMING BEACON SHOWS THE FALCON ON THE MOVE ? FINALLY!! NOW WE END THIS, GRIBBET!
Goodwin Williamson 4-15

A 1981 Star Wars Daily and Sunday page, written by Archie Goodwin and drawn by Al Williamson.

Ringgenberg: *Did you first see the Flash Gordon comic strips in comic book form or in the newspaper?*

Williamson: In the Spanish newspapers–in color.

Ringgenberg: *Were they reprinting the Raymond stuff?*

Williamson: Yeah. This was 1940, so Raymond was working on it. They ran about three months behind the U.S. papers.

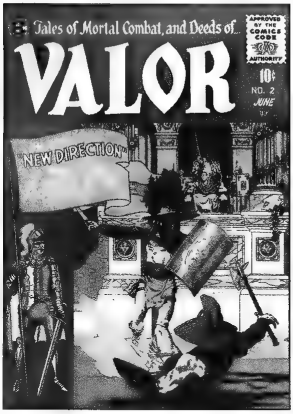
Ringgenberg: *Were you able to find some of the comic books that reprinted the old strips?*

Williamson: Yeah, I found some of the King Comics. They reprinted the Sunday pages, but they were cut down so

small you hardly could see them.

Ringgenberg: *You said that the serial really inspired you. Was Buster Crabbe's portrayal of Flash part of that?*

Williamson: Oh sure. The first hero I ever had in the movies was Errol Flynn. And I first saw him at seven or eight years old. I saw Robin Hood and said that's it. I was a Flynn man and still am, from the age of eight. Oh yeah, I'm going to pattern Prince Barin a little bit after Flynn. In fact I was looking at a Flynn book today, trying to get some ideas.



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One of the all-time great renderings of gladiatorial combat in ancient Rome appeared on the cover to Valor #2 (Jun 1955).

Ringgenberg: *Do you still get excited when you see good work in the medium?*

Williamson: Oh, yeah. I got very excited when I saw Dave Stevens' Rocketeer; that was a breath of fresh air. It absolutely took me back. I happened to have my friend Carlos (Garzon) in the studio when we got the book; Dave sent us a couple of books, and I'd never realized how good he was. I had seen his work before and realized he was good, but when I saw The Rocketeer, we just went out of our minds because it was just like the old stuff, you know? It had that wonderful feel of comics, and oh, wow! Look at this plane, and, oh, look at this. You just enjoyed it... enjoyed reading it and looking at it.

And who's done something like that lately? (*Laughter*) Not very many...So, yeah, if there's something really good and exciting, it's great. I think we're always looking to recapture that thrill that we had when we first saw something we loved, whether it's a film, or comics.

Ringgenberg: *Do you ever get that feeling when you're working that you know you're doing well?*

Williamson: Yes. About once or twice a year, for about three and a half hours that happens to me. Otherwise it's like pulling teeth. But, you know, I keep trying. Once in a while you get a feeling, 'Hey, I'm finally getting there... Boy, I thought this was going to be a real dog, and it worked out kind of nice.' It's very gratifying when something is so hard to do, and yet you put it out at the last moment. Sometimes it turns out to be, say, just one or two panels that you avoid doing. You do everything else but those two panels, and two hours before the deadline you know you've got to do it and all of a sudden it starts flowing, and they turn out. That's a pleasant surprise.

Ringgenberg: *How did you get started?*

Williamson: I never actually sat down and drew for the sake of drawing. I just sat down to draw for fun. I was not a child genius or anything like that. It wasn't until 1940, when I was about nine or ten, that I started drawing my own comic books in regular lined school composition books. That's how I started. I kept doing it, and kept doing it, and kept doing it, and luckily I was always looking at good artists like Alex Raymond.

The very first artist that inspired me was an Argentine, Martinez de Carlos Clement. He was the first one that really made me enjoy comics, so I took after him. And then, of course, I discovered Caniff, Raymond, and Foster. So that was, of course, exciting as hell to find something like Alex Raymond... and Hal Foster was just incredible too. When I did find them, oh boy! It was a whole new world... and the happiest days of my childhood. That was 1939 through 1941.

I remember when I saw The Spirit the first time in

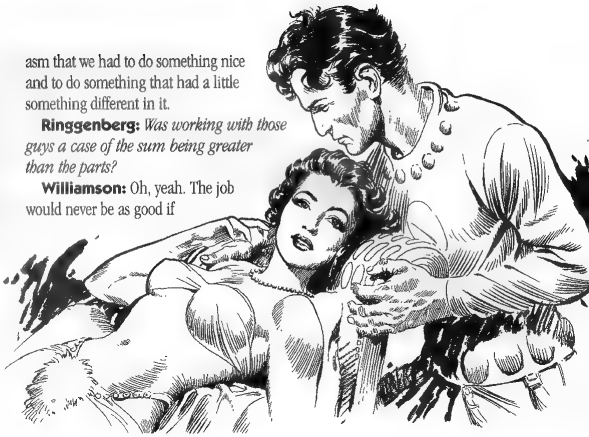
Spanish, it came out in color, and I went out of my mind. It wasn't until a couple of years later that I realized Will Eisner was the same guy who did Hawks of the Seas under the name of Willis B. Rensie. Hawks of the Seas was a great strip and was one of my favorites. I used to get it every week when it came out. When they stopped, with the 124th or 125th page, that was it. It said: The End. I almost cried that it wasn't going to come out any more. I mean I really lived that stuff.

Ringgenberg: *You've worked with several other artists on and off throughout your career…*

Williamson: Yes… mostly for the company. Also because of the fact that they were so damn good, and it was nice to turn out a beautiful job. I suppose, in one way, I liked to see something that I did and yet, had something I didn't do in it… and that I'd enjoy looking at just as much (if not more) than my stuff. It added another dimension to my work that I wished I could have done myself. I still enjoy looking at jobs that Roy (Krenkel) and Frank (Frazetta) and Angelo (Torres) and I worked on. I look at the stuff that the boys have done on it, and it is just so nice, and then I'll see a figure of mine in amongst the stuff and it's kind of nice too. It's like, I'm here with my friends, and we turned out this nice job. It isn't a penciler and inker thing, it's more the enthusiasm that we had to do something nice and to do something that had a little something different in it.

Ringgenberg: *Was working with those guys a case of the sum being greater than the parts?*

Williamson: Oh, yeah. The job would never be as good if these guys hadn't worked on it. That goes without saying. The job was improved immediately because we all did what we loved to do on it.



Frank did that beautiful inking… not that he didn't enjoy drawing too. His inking on the jungles and figures and other stuff was phenomenal. And Roy's beautiful backgrounds… the cities, the rocket ships, and the gadgets were tremendous. And of course, I enjoyed drawing figures…

Stunning examples of the Williamson/ Frazetta wizardry at figure rendering. "I always admired artists who could draw figures well. Alex did some of the best figures, and Reed Crandall… It's hard to draw a heroic figure."

Ringgenberg: *Do you think retaining a childlike (not childish) point of view is more important to people in this business than in other types of businesses?*

Williamson: Generally, a lot of grown ups lose that childlike quality, and it's a shame. I think an artist has to keep that point of view… and he's lucky if he can. In fact, that's what shocked me so much when I first came to the States in 1944 and met artists and cartoonists. Many didn't give a damn about movie serials or collecting strips, or anything like that. Until I met Roy, which was 1948, I didn't know anyone who cared for the stuff the way I did. And then later I met Angelo, who loved the films that I loved, like those with Fred Astaire, the old adventure movies, Gunga Din and stuff like that.

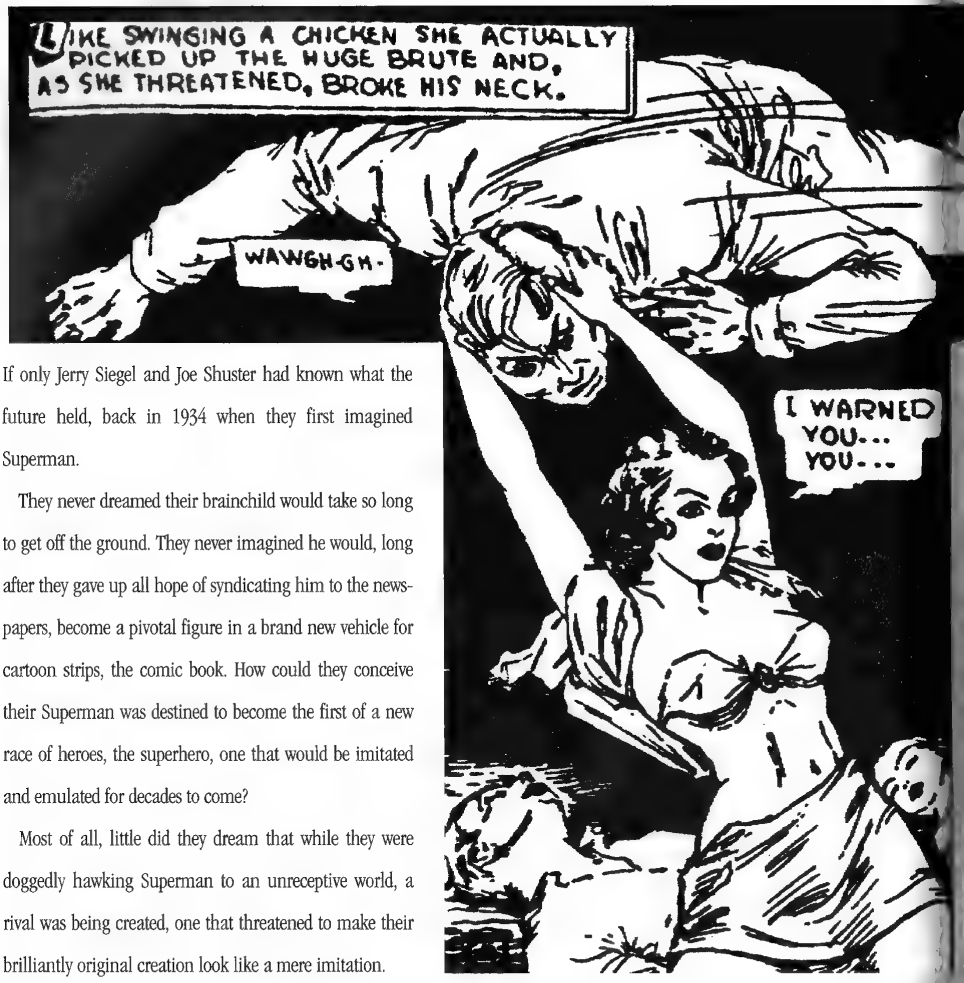
Ringgenberg: *The 1930s and early 1940s were a really powerful period. The art and music is still viable and interesting today… as are the wall murals.*

Williamson: The car designs were incredible… just absolutely incredible!

Ringgenberg: *Some suggest that the aesthetic sense of that period was superior to what's being "pawned off" on the public these days…*

Williamson: Oh, I agree with that. It was just like the peak of everything. I think it's been going downhill ever since.

Ringgenberg: *What do you think you'd be doing if you weren't in comics?* *(Continued on page 45)*


LIKE SWINGING A CHICKEN SHE ACTUALLY PICKED UP THE HUGE BRUTE AND, AS SHE THREATENED, BROKE HIS NECK.
WAWGH-GH-
I WARNED YOU... YOU...

If only Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster had known what the future held, back in 1934 when they first imagined Superman.

They never dreamed their brainchild would take so long to get off the ground. They never imagined he would, long after they gave up all hope of syndicating him to the newspapers, become a pivotal figure in a brand new vehicle for cartoon strips, the comic book. How could they conceive their Superman was destined to become the first of a new race of heroes, the superhero, one that would be imitated and emulated for decades to come?

Most of all, little did they dream that while they were doggedly hawking Superman to an unreceptive world, a rival was being created, one that threatened to make their brilliantly original creation look like a mere imitation.

THE SUPERHERO...

Amazing, but true! Olga Mesmer was the first superhero to see print.

BEFORE SUPERMAN

and the first superheroine in comic book history! BY WILL MURRAY

The story of the first superhero in comics is well-known. Two high school kids from Cleveland dream up the ultimate hero, dub him Superman, and realize they have a property that could be the next Tarzan. They create sample comic strips and offer it to every syndicate under the sun.

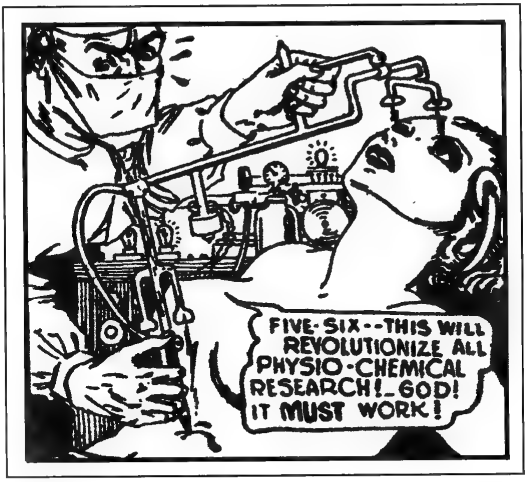
Between 1934 and 1938 they are rejected and rejected and rejected. When they run out of syndicates, Siegel and Shuster lower their sights and offer Superman to various fly-by-night publishers. Anything to get their wish-fulfillment fantasy hero off the ground.

At one point, Shuster becomes so discouraged, he tears up his prototype strip. At another, Siegel tries to hook up with other artists. One of them, Mel Graff, would purloin the concept for a caped and costumed flying magician in a 1935 newspaper strip called "Polly and Her Pals," then, fortunately, cast the character aside. Wherever they turn, no one thinks the outlandish Superman has any commercial potential.

Only when M. C. Gaines, a supplier of strips, named suggests it to a feature-hungry comic book editor named Vincent Sullivan does Superman reach print, going on to become, not just another overnight success, but the father of countless costumed heroes to follow.

Superman, the first superhero. It's an American success story. From the cover of *Action Comics* #1 to immortality. The origin of the character is almost as famous as the origin of the Man of Steel himself.

Except–it's not completely true. Superman was not the first superhero. A year before *Action* #1, another super-character, possessing super-strength and X-ray vision, with roots in a



Three panels showing Olga using her super strength to snap the neck of a murderer, the whips & chains that were a regular part of the Olga mythos, and Olga's mother suffering the tortures of Dr. Mesmer's experiments.

super-civilization from another planet, had debuted in comic strip form. And the publisher was no less than the publisher of Superman!

A superhero before Superman? How can this be? Who can this be?

As they used to say in the Silver Age, this untold tale of the Golden Age of comics is not a hoax. Not an imaginary story. It's real, and after almost sixty years, now it can be told.

First, some background: When Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster failed to place their Superman strip, they found themselves working for the early DC Comics, which had passed from the hands of former pulp writer Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson to Harry Donenfeld, a printer-turned publisher who printed Nicholson's covers. Donenfeld had started out printing risqué covers to various salacious magazines like *Pep* and *Spicy Stories*.

In 1934, in partnership with an editor named Frank Armer, Donenfeld launched a publishing operation that would go through several evolutions of name and focus. This company went into the pulp magazine business, launching the infamous Spicy pulp line, beginning with Spicy Detective Stories. It was known variously as Modern Publications, Culture, Trojan and other permutations designed to confound censors and local authorities determined to stamp out their mild form of pornography.

Sitnaltan villain Ombo writhes in frustration and then tries to force Queen Margot to acknowledge him as supreme ruler.

But while these three assemble the ray-gun, Ombo and his rebels are gaining ground
YOU MARGOT! SPEAK NOW! SAY OMBO YOUR KING!
NO? THEN YOU BE SLAVE!

The success of *Spicy Detective Story* and its companion magazines gave Donenfeld the ability to branch out into other fields. When he acquired Wheeler-Nicholson's comics line in 1937, he had been publishing comic strips for three years. More amazingly, the strips were being furnished by what can now be revealed to be the very first comic book "shop" in history, predating the Chesler studio by a solid three years!

Out of this unknown, completely undocumented shop (they were called "fun factories" in those days) came the first superhero in comic strip form–and it wasn't Superman!

Adolphe Barreaux is probably one of the most obscure artists of the Golden Age of comics. His work can rarely be found in titles of that period. "The Magic Crystal of History" is one notable example of his work. A time-travel feature, it appeared in the first DC comic, *New Fun Comics* #1, in 1935. The chief reason Barreaux's work is so scarce is that he was busy running a shop that has until now been forgotten in the prehistoric mists of the early comic book landscape.

We know relatively little about the man himself. In 1969, comics historian Ron Goulart contacted Barreaux about his career and the artist replied:

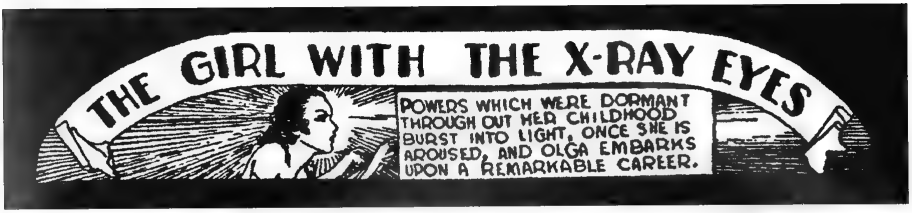
"First met Frank Armer socially in 1926 when he was publishing a few medium-sized magazines, about 6" x 9," under the company name of Ramer Reviews, at 120 West 42nd St. N.Y.C. In 1928, when I abandoned show business to set up my studio as an illustrator, I immediately began to do some work for Frank. By then he had moved to Park Place, but still doing same size books, but changing over from 'girls and gags' type to complete stories. Somewhere about 1930, Frank, in some sort of association with Harry Donenfeld (publisher of girly pulps and later, Superman) and Mike Estrow of Leader News Co. (distributors) started Trojan Magazines, Inc. at 125 East 46th Street. That is when Frank introduced the *Spicy Detective*, *Spicy Western*, etc. line, and was the editor. The titles were, of course, come-ons. The material was not spicy, even by the standards of that time."

One of the earliest company names Armer and Donenfeld operated under was Super Magazines, Inc.–founded in 1934, the year generally given as the year of Superman's creation!

"I established Majestic Studios about that time," Barreaux further recalled, describing it as an "art and production service" that functioned as Trojan's art department.

Majestic Studios. Unknown. Unchronicled. But very important to understanding the first superhero, as we will see.

Barreaux was the artist, and presumably creator if not writer, of the infamous "Sally the Sleuth" strip which debuted in *Spicy Detective Stories* (November, 1934). A two-page feature, Sally was a girl detective in the Mae West/Jean Harlow mold who was forever stumbling into distress and undress as assorted ruffians


THE GIRL WITH THE X-RAY EYES
POWERS WHICH WERE DORMANT THROUGH OUT HER CHILDHOOD BURST INTO LIGHT, ONCE SHE IS AROUSED, AND OLGA EMBARKS UPON A REMARKABLE CAREER.

attacked her clothing in hopes of assailing her chastity.

Although as crudely written as a Depression-vintage *Tijuana Bible*, Sally was drawn with a certain saucy élan that was the hallmark of Barreaux's simple yet titillating style.

Sally must have been a hit because an adventure strip called "Diana Daw" was added to *Spicy Adventure Stories* a few months later. Drawn by Max Plaisted, it was bylined Charles Maxwell. Other strips followed. "Polly of the Plains" in *Spicy Western Stories* (November, 1936). The first two installments were signed "Michael." After that the obscure Joseph Sokoli took over. All were two-pagers designed to place the female lead in as much provocative peril and as few clothes as possible without venturing out of the raw realm of the risqué into the obviously obscene.

These sexy strips were all the work of Majestic Studios, supervised by Adolphe Barreaux, a self-described unreconstructed confederate out of Charleston, South Carolina and Yale. They were the first products of the first comic strip shop ever organized.

And Trojan wasn't Majestic's only client either. Max Plaisted's futuristic "Ace Jordan" strip appeared in a pulp called *Thrilling Adventures* in 1934 and ran through 1940. Bylined Bob McKay, it was laid out exactly like "Diana Daw," indicating it was the product of the same shop. After comic books began booming, Majestic appears to have furnished material for Leo Margulies' *Thrilling* and *Exciting Comics*, too. Barreaux himself drew two serial strips for *Champion Comics*. And he drew two Golden Age superhero features, "The Raven," which debuted in *Sure-Fire Comics* #1 and "The Black Spider," which ran in *Super-Mystery Comics*, both published by Ace.

But the Majestic strip that made comics history and has never been recognized debuted in the August 1937 *Spicy Mystery Stories*. Drawn–or at least signed–by Watt Dell, it bore the flamboyant title, "The Astounding Adventures of Olga Mesmer, the Girl with the X-Ray Eyes."

That's correct. The first superhero was really a superheroine. Olga is a bizarre strip. Very much in keeping with *Spicy Mystery*'s slant, which was *Weird Tales*-style horror.

Dr. Hugh Rankin saves a strange amnesiac woman from a sinister, shadowy assailant, and impressed by her exotic beauty and limpid, compelling eyes, falls in love. They marry. Sensing Margot–the name she is given–is the key to his long-planned experiment involving a "soluible x-ray," Rankin subjects his lovely wife to a strange scientific device that requires her to be nude and jabbed in the eyes and stomach by what looks like a super three-needle hypodermic. For several months after, Margot is bedridden and blindfolded while her sight heals.

Presumably denied his lovely wife's affections, Rankin starts partying with assorted loose ladies. All this carrying on stirs Margot, who rips off her bandages and literally stares through her bedroom wall–transfixing Rankin in the arms of a disheveled yet delectable companion with her powerful X-ray eyes. But let the unknown scripter take the story from here:

OLGA WHO BRUSHED THE WORLD'S CHIEF IN THE WORLD'S RESCUE OF HIS QUEEN, THE LOVELY DIANA DALLAS, HAS BEEN TOLD THAT HIS KINGDOM MAY BE TOMBSHELLS TO THE PRINCESS OLGA, IF SHE REFUSES TO GIVE HER BODY AND SOUL DIRECT TO THE CARE OF KING RULER OF THE PLANET VENUS. THEN, ONLY THEN, SHALL SHE AND HER KINGDOM BE SAVED. SHE CONSENTED WHICH DISCOVERY MAY BE FOR THE OPERATIONS.
A BLEEDING OF 30 MILLIONS SCOUT PLANE WAS SHOOT NOW!
GOOD! NOW I SHALL SEE THE STARTLED OMEGO SHALL THE SAME SHALL STAY A TWO EARTH DAYS FOR TEN LUCKSOME YEARS! WE SHALL WIN JULY.
OMEGO IS GRIEVED AND RECEIVES INSTRUCTIONS
YOU BE MUCH ALONE THIS YEAR, OMEGO! THERE, WILL TAKE YER BOARDS. YOU CLOSE BIG STONE WHEN WE GONE.
VERY YEARS! VERY WELL. I MUST OBEY.
BUT I WIN YET!
THE SHIP USED BY THE PEOPLE OF SITNALTA GENERATES BY SMASHING ALL ATOMIC MATTER WHICH LIES IN IT'S PATH.
THIS CREATES A PERFECT VACUUM WHICH VIRTUALLY SUCKS THE GREAT ROCKET INTO THE SPACE AHEAD. IT MAY BE TURNED, OR REVERSED, ONLY WITHIN THE ATMOSPHERIC BELT SURROUNDING THE PLANETS - - BUT WITH PERFECT SAFETY AND ACCURACY, OF IT'S OWN VOLITION.
THE TRAVELERS HASTILY SIGN THE RECORD FOR THE TRIP ON

Shag, Princess Olga, Rodney Prescott, and Queen Margot prepare to travel to the city of Sitnalta (Atlantis spelled backwards) on the planet Venus.

"Dr. Hugo Mesmer is dead! Literally killed by a look! Margot his wife falls unconcious and in a few hours–She also gives up her life. But in that instant her daughter OLGA is born. The babe inherits the effects of the operation performed upon her mother, together with the mother's haunting charm. Adventure unheard-of are in store for her." [sic]

All this in the first two-page installment. The next issue jumps ahead some twenty years, where an opening caption explains:

"Olga's father was a scientist who operated on the remarkable eyes and heart of his wife. She was given super-human strength, and also the ability to see right thru solid objects... Olga inherited these traits. Orphaned at birth, she is reared and carefully protected by a crotchety god-father."

Because this is, after all, *Spicy Mystery Stories*, a caption on

Rodney and Olga escape by leaping (flying?) a great distance....

the facing page adds, "Powers which were dormant through out her childhood burst into light, once she is aroused, and Olga embarks upon a remarkable career."

One can take the word "aroused" any way one wants... Olga calls her godfather "Daddy" Rankin. Much like Ma and Pa Kent, Daddy counsels Olga to keep her powers a secret.

But soon, Olga is called to her first superheroic action. Spying a murder in progress through the thick wall of her home, she bursts through it á la Superman, shouting: "I'll wring your nasty neck." And, taking the killer by his thick throat, she swings him around and around like a helpless chicken until his neck is broken and Olga's clothes are all over the place. And so it would go with Olga–forever dropping her dainties when "aroused."

Rodney sees Olga for the first time and proclaims "Am I in heaven?"

The woman victim proves to be dead, but her male companion survives, although he's in rough shape. Taking the comatose man to a doctor, Olga offers her blood for transfusion, and you guessed it, her powers are transferred to young Rodney Prescott, who upon reviving takes one look at the lovely vision and asks, "Am I in heaven?"

Rod discovers he now possesses superstrength. Olga discovers she's lost hers. But she still has her trusty X-ray eyes. Good thing, too. She's going to need them in the installments ahead.

Seeing that Olga is now vulnerable, Daddy Rankin decides to make his long-deferred move. Secretly, he's had the hots for his unsuspecting ward. Winking like George Reeves as Clark Kent, Rod allows himself to be tied to his wheelchair while Olga is chained to a basement wall. Rod breaks free and tears apart yet another wall in that poor beleaguered house going after the would-be molester.

Subduing Rankin, Rod clobbers the armed house servants, sending one crashing through a brick wall. Olga in arm, he makes a very Wayne Boring-style kangaroo leap that takes out the last tormentors standing between them and the next issue.

A caption attempts a scientific explanation for the transfer of strength. It seems the blood transfusion gave Rod Olga's "power chromosomes."

Once Daddy Rankin is disposed of, Olga and Rod–conveniently he's a graduate physicist from Nuremburg–decide to go in search of the secret formula that gave Olga's mother her exotic powers.

Here the story veers into the absurd. Going to the ruins of Olga's birthplace, they discover the graves of Olga's parents. Kneeling at the graves of Hugo and Margot, Olga peers down with her penetrating eyes. She's not a ghoul. She merely suspects the secret formula was buried with them.

"This seems a horrid thing to do," Olga frets. "But I've a strange feeling that it is what mother would want."

The next thing you know, the grave opens up and a devil-eared giant emerges! He attacks Olga. Rod makes short work of him. Another giant emerges, introducing himself as Shag and calling Olga "Princess."

While all this is sinking in, Margot, attired in scanty but regal garments, emerges from her own grave!

"You?" Olga blurts out. "My mother! So young! So beautiful! Can it be true?"

"Yes, my baby, my darling!" Margot returns. "I shall never die! We are immortals here. But not gods. We are children of a lost science. I thought your father might save us, but he is enshrined beside my throne."

Turns out the first giant, Ombo by name, was out to make Olga his so he could take over Sitnalta, the realm over which Queen Margot rules. Everyone repairs underground for further explanations.

Margot explains that in order to retain her throne, she must come to earth once a year to drink from an underground fountain. Ombo was the shadowy figure Hugo Rankin saved Margot from way back in the first installment of the strip.

"Twenty years ago," she tells Olga, "the vile Ombo drank first, and I was forced to flee or be enslaved. It was then that Doctor Hugo Mesmer rescued me. I 'died' when you were born, and returned here. I've taken care to keep my reign since then."

It's awful thin, but what do you expect for a serial told in two-page installments? A caption adds that Margot and her followers are actually from the planet Venus.

At that point, Ombo makes his move and the underground lair explodes in full revolt. Olga and Rod swing into action. Aided by Shag (who gets himself fried using an "electric-neon anesthetic" ray device), they put down the revolt.

Desperate to save the loyal Shag, Queen Margot orders everyone into a rocket ship called a "Space Digger" headed for "the capital of Sitnalta on the planet Venus"–whatever that means.

During the trip, control over the ship seesaws back and forth, as Olga's X-ray eyes come into play again and again and the art gets looser and more rushed looking. In fact, it's clear that it's no longer the work of Watt Dell. In fact, other changes have been taking place. Gradually, the artists stop stripping the

female lead at every opportunity, settling for showing flashes of cleavage and garters. The change begins during the episode where Daddy Rankin chains Olga to the basement. At the end of one installment, she's in her underwear. At the beginning of the next, her clothes have reappeared without explanation.

Events have been moving swiftly in the life of Olga Mesmer, but now they jump to warpspeed. Without warning, all the plot threads are swiftly tied together.

Working as a team, with Olga's X-ray orbs backing up Rod's super-strength, they finally put down the pesky Ombo just in time to make a soft landing on Venus. (Using her super-vision to see through a bulkhead floor, she nails Ombo with one good shot to the head.)

On Venus, Margot receives a marriage proposal from the Prince of Mars, whose name is Boris, (guess that's why they call it the Red Planet!) in order to bring peace to the two planets which have been at war for generations.

"Mars!" Margot cries, fainting into Rod Prescott's waiting arms. "Peace! At last!" Olga is left looking like a minor player in her own strip, although a lovely one at that. One assumes poor Shag's burns are taken care of. He seems to have been forgotten too.

It all wrapped up in the October, 1938 *Spicy Mystery*, a mere six months after Superman's debut in *Action Comics* #1.

"The Astounding Adventures of Olga Mesmer" bears all the marks of a strip that started going in one direction, but got sidetracked into another. I have a hard time believing–given the fact that these Spicy strips were basically excuses to get their female leads as naked as possible in every installment–that the nameless writer really planned to move the strip to Venus from the start. Or that he planned much of anything at all. It's pretty clear he was winging it from month to month.

Dr. Mesmer ministers to his "guinea pig" wife after the weird experiment.

"De dame's nuts!" shouts the murderer in astonishment as he slices the abdomen of his brassiere and garter-clad victim.

Still, the resemblance to the early Superman is sometimes startling: the origin involving an orphan from another world. The various shticks and powers–all Olga needed was a costume. But even if they gave her one, I imagine she'd keep falling out of it. As much as we know about this newly discovered feature, many questions remain.

Who was Watt Dell? No one knows. But he often illustrated stories in the *Spicy* pulps under the name Watt Dell Lovett, so that was probably his real name. Some of the later strips were signed "Stone." An interior artist working for Trojan in a very similar style signed his work, Paul H. H. Stone, so it looks like Stone took over from Lovett.

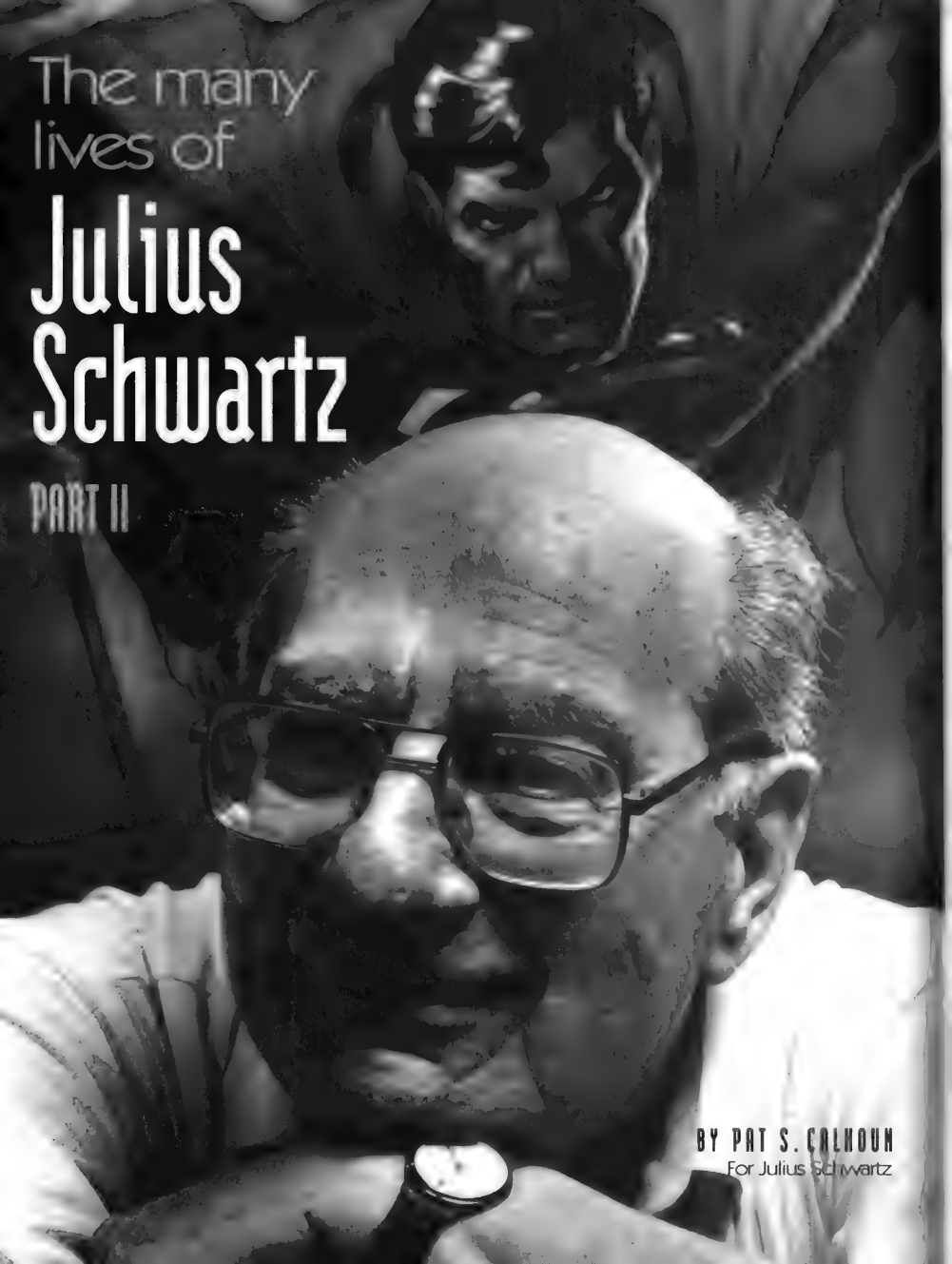
As for the writer, it might have been Barreaux himself. But even that can't be said for sure. Barreaux recalled his staff this way: "Some of the men with me were (writer) Worth B. Carnahan; (artists) Henry Kiefer, Harvey McClelland, Howard Ferguson. Others not connected with me were Max Plaisted, Jay McArdle, Newton Alfred, and others whom I cannot remember."

Worth Carnahan later launched *Champion Comics*, but that doesn't constitute conclusive proof of anything. So it's anyone's guess who wrote or created Olga Mesmer.

It is more interesting to puzzle over the reason for wrapping up the strip after only a year. The final installment came so close on the heels of Superman's emerging as the dominant feature in *Action Comics*, I strongly suspect that publisher Harry Donenfeld might have noticed these marked similarities and decided, maybe for legal reasons, maybe for reasons so arcane we can only guess at them, to quietly bury poor Olga forever. Still, it's amazing the parallels that emerge between Superman and Olga Mesmer, especially since they were reaching the public at about the same time.

Hmm. I wonder. You don't suppose that Siegel and Shuster's much-traveled Superman samples ever found their way to Majestic Studios? I guess we'll never know the answer to that one....

Two years later, *Spicy Mystery* became host to a new Watt Dell super-girl strip called "Vera Ray," but by that time it didn't matter. Vera was lost in the sea of super characters flooding the newsstands of 1940, and soon vanished into the limbo of lost strips as well. But Olga Mesmer was an original. The first superhero to see print... definitely the first superheroine in comics history! ■



The many lives of Julius Schwartz

PART II

BY PAT S. CALHOUN
For Julius Schwartz

Continued from CBM #50 page 34

Chapter Four: Revival Of Wonder

In early 1956 DC came up with an answer to the problem of experimenting with new genres in the marketplace. Since it took a few months to get full sales reports on any given release, trying out a title that didn't sell could be quite expensive, since several issues would already be out before reports came in. So DC started *Showcase*, a title where each issue "tried out" something different, and if sales reports were positive–they'd try it again. The first three issues failed to inspire readership, and during an editorial conference at the DC offices, it was suggested that for the fourth issue, maybe they should "dust off" one of their retired Golden Age superheroes. The Flash seemed like a good choice, and it happened that the editor of the original *Flash Comics* was still on staff–Julius Schwartz.

At that point all eyes turned upon Julie, and he accepted the challenge. Julie didn't want to revive the silver-hatted speedster of yore, who'd never had much of an origin back in 1939, but to create a whole new hero. Julie envisioned a Flash with a more scientifically plausible origin, a sleeker design, and–a charming touch–the new hero is inspired towards his role by memories of reading the original Flash in *Flash Comics*!

Julie gave Robert Kanigher–who'd written Flash in the 1940s–the writing assignment, and they carefully prepared the plot. The new Flash was Barry Allen, a police chemist who, ironically, had (and kept) the habit of always arriving late to appointments. When a lightning bolt struck the lab and spilled a mix of chemicals upon Allen, he gained the power of super speed. Carmine Infantino designed the new costume and penciled the first issue, inked by Joe Kubert. The first issue appeared as *Showcase* #4 (September/October 1956), and the majority of fans mark this book as the start of the Silver Age.

When *Showcase* #4 sold well, the character was given a second shot in *Showcase* #8. This time writer John Broome created the first of Flash's signature villains, Captain Cold–in Schwartz's world even the bad guys embodied scientific concepts.

Showcase #8 sold well too, and DC–excited by this response–ran Flash in both #13 and #14. After those flew off the stands as well, it was definite–Flash was a hit! The first appearance "in a magazine of his own," came out in early 1959 (cover-dated March) as *Flash* #105. It was decided to continue the numbering from the old series, because it was known that readers preferred an already-established title to a newcomer.

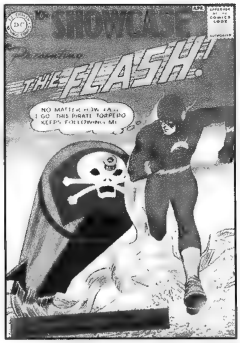
Later in 1959 (dated September) *Showcase* #22 featured the second revival of a Golden Age hero. This time Schwartz engineered a revamp of Green Lantern. Whereas the Golden Age

WHO WAS THE INCREDIBLE CREATURE WHO ROBBED--YET LEFT NO CLUE TO WHAT WAS STOLEN...
WHO CRASHED IN AND OUT OF BUILDINGS --WITHOUT CAUSING ANY DAMAGE...
WHO SHOWED HIMSELF --BUT COULDN'T BE SEEN?
GREEN LANTERN
GRAPPLES WITH THIS ASTOUNDING FOE IN...
"The INVISIBLE DESTROYER!"
featured in the DECEMBER ISSUE OF
SHOWCASE
ON SALE Everywhere
SHOWCASE
GREEN LANTERN
SUPERMAN • DC • NATIONAL COMICS

Green Lantern acts to end the atomic bomb blasting of "The Invisible Destroyer" in Showcase #23 (Dec 1959). DC pushed this second GL issue extremely hard in their house ads.

Green Lantern bordered on the magical, the Silver Age Green Lantern had an elaborately-detailed origin and explanation for his powers, using a science fiction background of an intergalactic police force overseen by the "Guardians." A dying alien Green Lantern crash-lands on Earth and selects test pilot Hal Jordan as his successor and gives him the power ring and battery used by the agents of the Guardians.

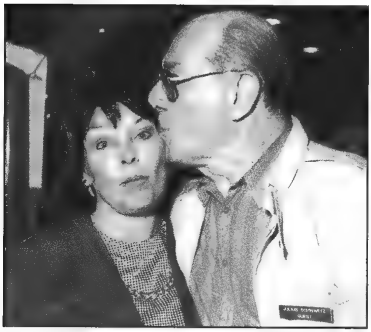
Unlike Flash, Green Lantern ran



The Scarlet Speedster's 3rd outing, in Showcase #13 (Apr 1958), featured Flash on the run from a pirate torpedo in "Around the World in Eighty Minutes."

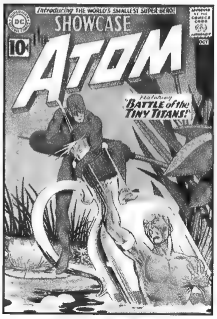
PHOTO BY BETH GWINN

in three consecutive issues of *Showcase*, written by Broome and elegantly rendered by Gil Kane. This was a major step in Julie's melding of science fiction and superhero universes, and the books sold extremely well. This inspired Julie to the greatest revamp of them all, transforming the Justice Society of America–which featured DC's golden superstars as a team–into the Justice League of America. Flash and Green Lantern were joined by Wonder Woman, Aquaman, and the Martian Manhunter, and the team first appeared in *Brave & Bold* #28 (March 1960). This was only one month after the third Green Lantern *Showcase* issue; it's amazing how fast things happened at the end of the decade when the Silver Age really started to take off. Mike Sekowsky met the challenge of drawing all the super folk, and Gardner Fox (who'd scripted the JSA) turned out some intricate novels involving a lot of super teamwork.



Julie and Gil Kane rose to the challenge of presenting "the World's Smallest Superhero" in novel diminutive yet dramatic situations again and again, but never with more memorable results than the first time, on Showcase #34, introducing the Silver Age Atom.

Once the Batman show was underway, the producer, Bill Dozier, asked Julie, "Can we give Commissioner Gordon a daughter and have her become Batgirl?" So Julie introduced Batgirl in Detective #359. On the TV show they cast Yvonne Craig as the Dynamic Damsel. Of course, when Julie finally met Yvonne, he hit her with the classic Schwartz come-on, "I created you!" Here, Batgirl lets her creator plant a kiss.



Though things would get crowded and confusing as time went on, this first major melding of "Earth One" and "Earth Two" characters was a remarkable achievement, with Schwartz's revival concept stretched to magnificent proportions. Shown is the classic cover of JLA #21 (Aug 1963).

Back then the DC universe was as much SF as superhero. Between the Flash and Green Lantern revivals, Julie had also pioneered a new SF hero in *Showcase*, the memorable Adam Strange, a present-day Earthman who was teleported to another planet where adventure awaited. On Rann, Adam tackled many cosmic adversaries but outfoxed them all–always being drawn back to Earth in the middle of a celebratory smooch with his interplanetary girlfriend. Adam Strange took over the lead spot in *Mystery In Space* with #53 (August 1959), and Infantino took over the art on a strip that was one the strongest results of Schwartz's masterful synthesis of SF and "long underwear."

Of course during this period Julie also kept plotting, editing, and packaging the non-continuing-character stories that headlined in *Strange Adventures* and (after #53) backed up Adam Strange in *Mystery In Space*. Every month brought an alien invasion, and these attacks on Earth were kept interesting by giving each one its own concept hook. People held their own against giant water warriors and faceless creatures, and the Earth survived such indignities as being counterfeited and being turned into a comet. Humanity invariably rose to the challenge of these interplanetary assaults, with the protagonist's ingenuity finally finding a chink in the aliens' armor.

Schwartz started another SF series in *Strange Adventures* #117 (August 1960), that would run in every third issue through #160, the post-nuclear holocaust adventures of the Atomic Knights. With scripts by John Broome and art by Murphy Anderson the series attained a believability and relevance that made it unique. The stories were sequential, and had the Knights traveling across the country after the Atomic war, making visits to the major cities to search out surviving pockets of humanity. The highlight of the series is "The King of New Orleans," a tale that climaxes with the Knights playing their own version of "When the Saints Go Marching In" to break a hypnotic spell sapping the city's resistance to their self-appointed "King." One of the things that gives the story power is Julie's own love of Dixieland jazz. Another brilliant entry is "The Cavemen of New York," where Gardner Grayle, the Knights' leader, literally "talks" the devolving New Yorkers back into modern people.

After shining in *Showcase* and starring in the JLA, Green Lantern earned his own title, with #1 dated July/August 1960, and the Justice League won their mag with the first issue dated October/November 1960. Neither issue said #1 on the cover. The JLA went on to add Green Arrow in issue #4.

Brave & Bold #34 (Mar 1961) reintroduced the third DC Golden Age hero with a Schwartz SF makeover. The cover and story art is by Joe Kubert.

It was during the revival of Hawkman, begun in *Brave & Bold* #34 (February/ March 1961), that discussions in the letters column began to include mentions of the world of Golden Age comics. And Julie took up printing the complete addresses of letter writers–this laid the foundation for comics fandom, which really blossomed in the early 1960s. Hawkman had two three-issue *Brave & Bold* tryouts. Again, the Golden Age version received an SF makeover: the winged wonders were married and were both police officers from another planet come to Earth to study our crime-fighting techniques. Art on the tryout issues was rendered by Joe Kubert, who'd worked on the Golden Age version, and once the winged wonders started in their own book in 1964, Murphy Anderson took over the drawing.

The next Schwartz revival made an SF superhero out of a Golden Age costumed crimefighter, with a snazzy origin package delivered by the crack team of Gardner Fox as writer and Gil Kane as artist. The Atom, "World's Smallest Super Hero," debuted in *Showcase* #34 (October/November 1961). Ray Palmer (named in homage to an editor of *Amazing Stories* who was not a tall person) harnesses the power radiated by a white dwarf star fragment and acquires the ability to shrink himself–even to the point where he can jump into a telephone and get modemed to a distant destination. The Atom joined the JLA in *Justice League* #14, and got his own title in June/July 1962.

In *Flash* #123 the Silver Age Flash met the Golden Age Flash within an alternate worlds storyline. This led, in 1963, to JLA #21 and #22, where the Justice League met the Justice Society. The clever juggling of the Earth One and Earth Two characters was at the same time a magisterial elaboration of the revival concept and the beginning of the end–as the DC universe would eventually grow top heavy and overcrowded.

Also in 1963 Julie masterminded a series that, although it never won its own title, has gone down in comics history as one of the all-time great "hybrid subgenre" offerings. *Brave & Bold* #45-49 presented Strange Sports Stories, combining science fiction and sports in a wild array of yarns that featured invisible baseball players, phantom boxers, and time-traveling race-cars.

Schwartz's duties shifted in 1964 when he was called upon to rescue Batman from the Caped Crusader's then-current cycle of SF gimmickry which had worn itself thin. The "new look" premiered in *Detective Comics* #327 (May 1964–the 30lst Batman issue and the 25th anniversary). Julie brought Carmine Infantino in, and the art.

(*Continued on page 60*)

1. Mindy Weiss Weltman writes in the Amazing World of DC #5 (1974): "Julie was my agent and friend, and he was a good editor, a real asset to every publication. Unlike most agents, he was a warm personal friend as well. He was so young then! I remember if he'd ever had a birthday. We used to call him 'the Greatest Boy in the World.' Remember when Julie's apartment was on the old Museum Row on 77th Street–William Jaradeau, Betty-Jo Hale, Dale Bender, Ken Weissinger, etc. Sometimes John Lindquist would be camping out and Jack Williamson, Richmond Hamilton, Eric Frank Russell, and so on. We drank endless tea. Sometimes Julie would come with a pint of rum here and there.

Most of us went off to war at first, and I remember with that German name, I went out of town a lot. I missed the new management as Julie, a couple of years later, went in and had a clean and a cleaned out anyway, and they were good, but where was the man's face? I remember?

Whatever success Julie attained, and that I wish, he earned it and he handled it. One thing we're making, one thing everybody recognizes. Here is one of the true gentlemen in the biz.

Julie, now good luck on all the travels while you can still enjoy them, now you're not wasting all those hours of having them cut into editorial cuts. Long years on you.

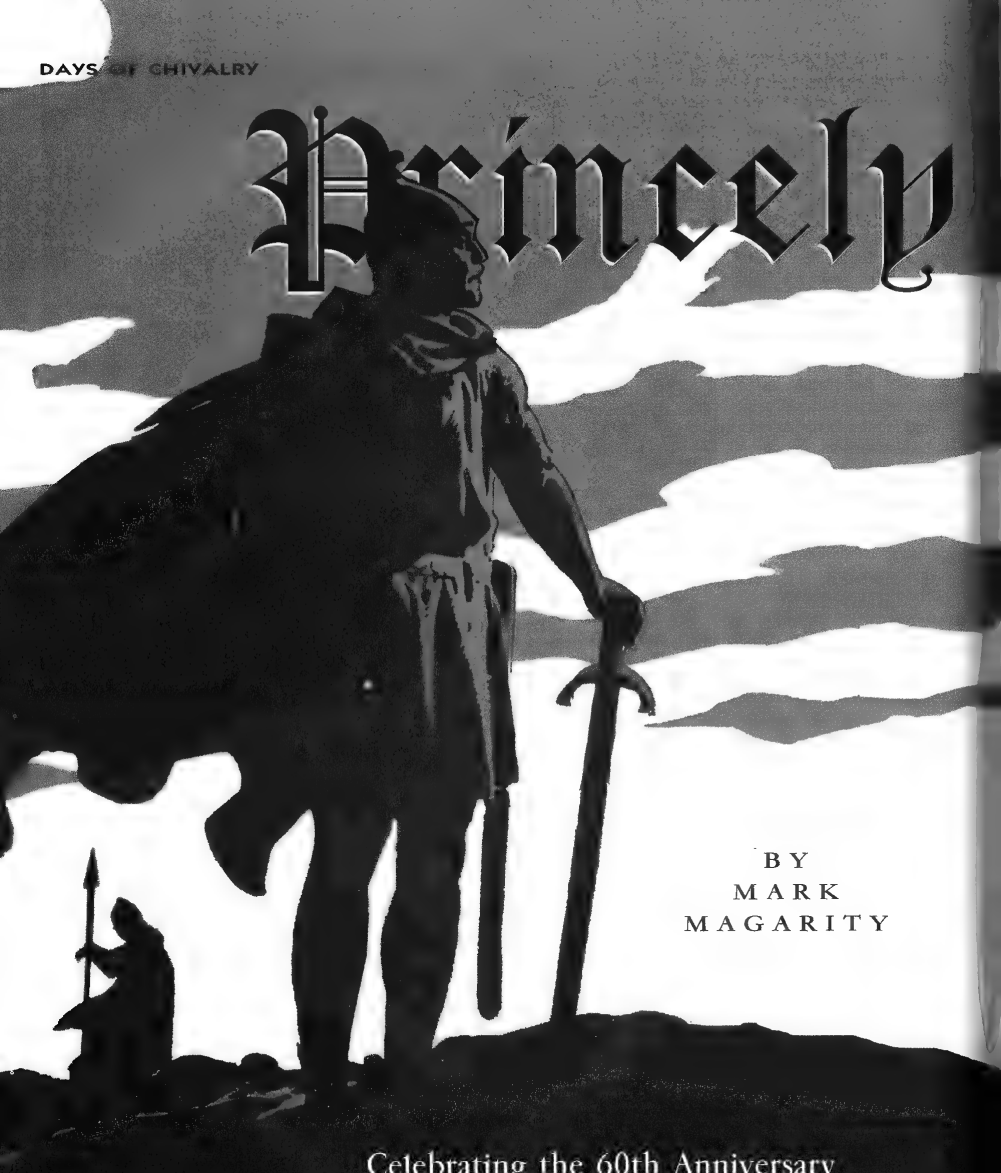
2. The late **Mark Brummond** wrote in a special booklet for a Julie Party of the 1972 San Diego Con: "When I was a kid, just beginning my lifelong comic book reading habit, I [continued on page 63]

Celebration of Wonder

COMPILED BY PAT S. ENLOUNT

Julie's 65th birthday was attended by (LEFT TO RIGHT) Terry Hayes, Jenette Kahn, Marv Wolfman, and Joe Orlando.

Princely



BY
MARK
MAGARITY

Celebrating the 60th Anniversary
of Hal Foster's legendary prince of Camelot
and the Regal Realm of Valiant Collectibles!

Playthings!

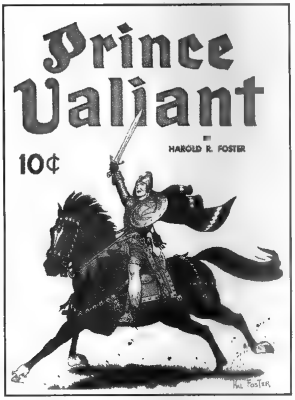
Camelot! King Arthur! Guinevere! Merlin! The Knights of the Round Table! Who has not, in the spirit of youth and imagination, tried to save a damsel in distress, avenge a terrible wrong, or fight for one's honor and country on the battlefields of England?

I know I have, but it has been only through the exploits of that chivalrous knight Prince Valiant that I have lived vicariously as a Knight of the Round Table.

For 60 years, as many of us celebrate Hal Foster's magnum opus, people from around the world continue to be thrilled by the adventures of Prince Valiant, a knight in a medieval age living in a fabled kingdom called Camelot. His story and the story of his family continue to arouse that spirit of adventure which lies in all of us.

I was 12 years-old when I saw my first *Prince Valiant* Sunday strip in 1962. I was living overseas in Lima, Peru, and going to an American school. I was an avid reader of comic books, but never paid much attention to the Sunday funnies except for the occasional *Peanuts* or *Dick Tracy*. Sitting in the library one day casually thumbing through the Sunday comic pages of the *Miami Herald*, that was delivered each week to our school, I came upon Foster's work in all its full-page glory. I was stunned. I was mesmerized. This was a story and art that grabbed me from the very beginning.

I was familiar with Tarzan, Superman, and other icons of fascinating strip art, but this was new to me. This was drawn unlike any comic strip I had ever seen before, and I decided right then and there to begin what was to become a life-long quest of collecting *Prince Valiant* Sunday strips, toys, games, books, and other objects related to Prince Valiant and his medieval world.



The oversized Feature Book #26 (1941) from David McKay Publishing.

Thirty-five years later I am still searching. The quest has not

been an easy one, for there are many collectors of Prince Valiant memorabilia as I was soon to discover. In fact, it wasn't until my first visit to the San Diego Comic Convention in 1972 that I realized I wasn't even looking at Foster's best work. I had never seen the Sunday strips from the '30s and '40s until that year in the dealers' room, and I was buying as many as I could afford. I was a child in a candy store with hundreds of pages spread before me. Alas! The memorabilia would be much more difficult to find.

Perhaps I have been luckier than most, or perhaps I was just in the right place at the right time, but building a collection of Prince Valiant memorabilia is like most endeavors; it takes time and an enormous amount of patience.

Most aficionados of the comic strip know the story of Prince Valiant and Hal Foster's influence in the world of comics. I will leave it to them to discuss the art and story of Prince Valiant, but what of the books, comics, toys, games, puzzles, and the like? Are they as rare as "hens' teeth," or can one just saunter into the Comic-Con International: San Diego, New York, or Chicago conventions and pick and choose? I don't think you can just pick and choose. Some items are rare while others seem to be plentiful, and I will try to provide you with an idea of what is out there.

Prince Valiant items have been around almost since the inception of the strip itself which originated in February of 1937. Perhaps one of the earliest items is the Prince Valiant comic book, *Feature Book* #26, from 1941. It's a collation of reprints from the first 63 Sunday strips with the exception of strip #29. It has the distinction of having the only original Foster art he ever did for a comic, and that was only the cover. Still, it is a striking book and high grade copies are scarce and difficult to find.

Next is the wood composition statue of Valiant circa 1944. It was made by Syroco, Inc., and stands at five inches high. Sold along with other characters from the King Feature Syndicate, the Prince Valiant figure is quite unique in its own way, but it is not scarce (except in perfect condition, of course).

Then in 1945, Foster wrote and illustrated the childrens' book *A Young Knight-A Tale of Medieval Times*. It has illustrations of a castle and the characters are called Young Arn and Melisande, but it makes no mention of the world of Prince Valiant except for its time period and its cover (which is a large picture taken from a panel of the Sunday strip). This panel shows Valiant in front of a typical evil despot of the kind Val was frequently to encounter in his travels. The illustration is on the cover of the book as well as the dust jacket of this very thin, fragile book about a young man's desire to become a Knight of the Round Table.

In the early '50s an explosion of Valiant memorabilia appeared on the marketplace due mainly, I believe, to the release in 1954 of the movie *Prince Valiant* starring Robert Wagner, James Mason, and Janet Leigh.

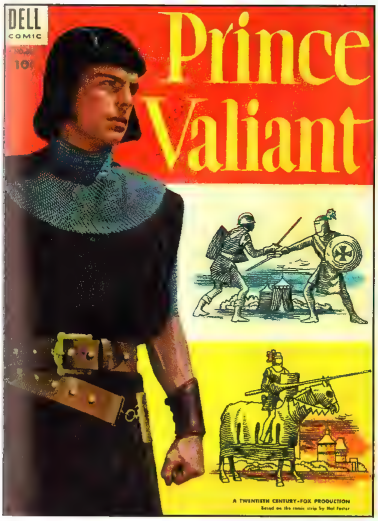
At that time one could buy a gorgeous Prince Valiant coloring book by Saalfield, the Prince Valiant tin dime bank, the Prince Valiant Game of Valor by Transogram, a puzzle by Built-Rite, pinbacks, a Christmas card, and the Prince Valiant candy with its added bonus of a T-shirt (for just 50¢ and two coupons sent to the Lerner Novelty Candy Company). With the exception of the Prince Valiant Game of Valor, all of these items are difficult to find, especially the Prince Valiant candy.

One of several rare pieces of memorabilia has to be the Prince (*text continues on page 68*)

Young squires, including a teenage Prince Valiant, sing Yule tide carols on the scarce full color Christmas card produced during the early 1950s.

Close-up of FC #788's cover art.

COLOR GALLERY



During the Prince Valiant "slow period" of the 1960s and 1970s, few Val collectibles were produced. One was the hardcover Treasure Book **Prince Valiant– In the Days of King Arthur** designed to be read aloud to younger readers.

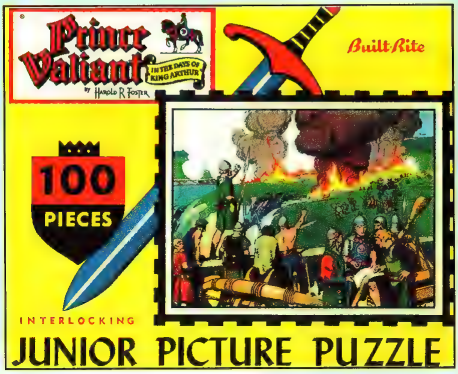
Sought after by both movie fans and Val collectors, **Four Color #567** (Jun 1954) was inspired by the then-current movie release, and features a photo-cover of Robert Wagner as Val and interior story art is by Bob Fujitani (Fuje).

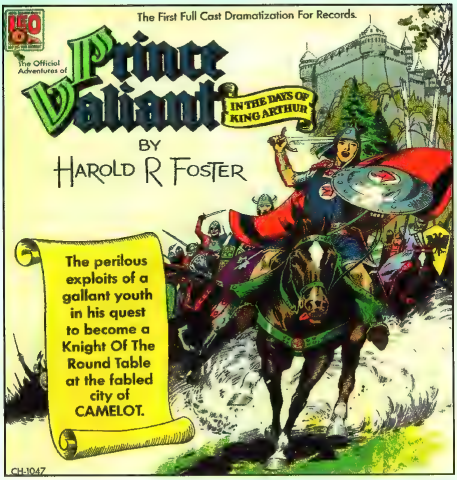
In 1945, Hal Foster wrote and illustrated the children's book **The Young Knight A Tale of Medieval Times.** Amazingly, this Foster collectible makes no reference to the world of Prince Valiant except for its beautiful color cover.

Close-up of the pinbacks.

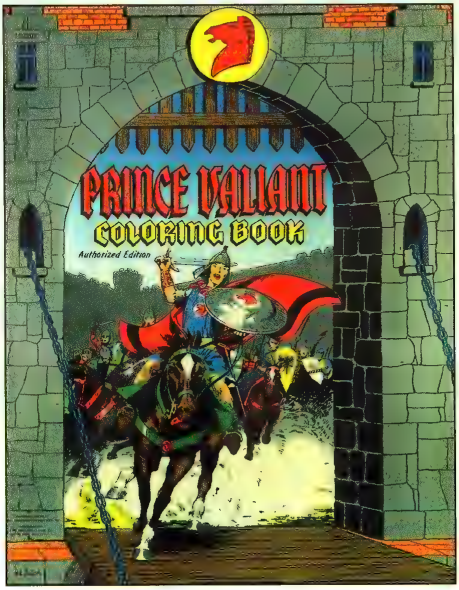
Consumed rather than collected by young Knights of the Round Table, the Prince Valiant candy box continues to be one of the rarest pieces of Prince Valiant memorabilia. Inspired by the product "Guess-Whats" of the same era, the packaging included an offer for an even rarer Val collectible... the official T-shirt. For "Just 50¢ and two wrappers, it can be yours!"

The 1950s "interlocking" Junior Picture Puzzle by Built-Rite lets you assemble your own cardboard scene of fiery destruction from the vantage point of Prince Valiant perched high on the castle walls.

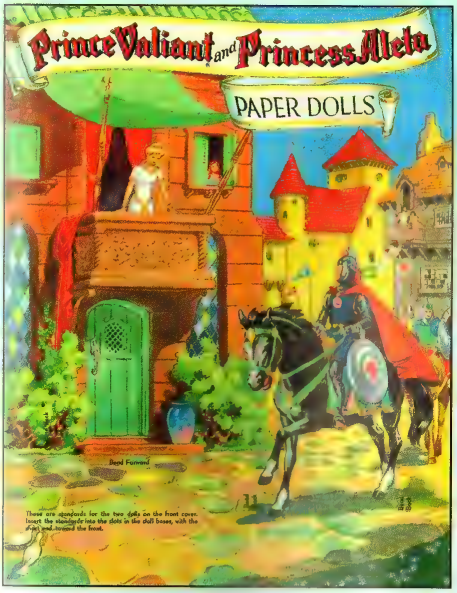



The First Full Cast Dramatization For Records
The Official Adventures of
Prince Valiant
IN THE DAYS OF KING ARTHUR
BY
HAROLD R FOSTER
The perilous exploits of a gallant youth in his quest to become a Knight Of The Round Table at the fabled city of CAMELOT.
CH-1047

In 1968, MGM's Leo The Lion records produced "the first full cast dramatization for records." It was, presumably, also the last. The packaging recycles the image used on the Coloring Book, the first Hastings House book, and the Dime Bank... and continues to give Foster due credit as the character's creator.



Three of the most collectible Prince Valiant items... the Syroco statue (circa 1944), the tin "Dime Bank" (circa 1954), and the beautiful Saalfield authorized edition Coloring Book (circa 1954). All are extremely difficult to find in high grade.

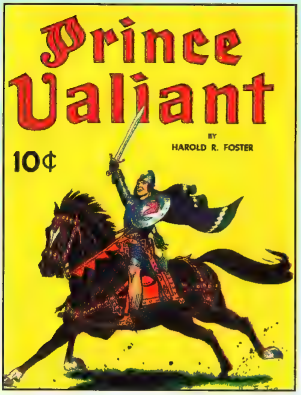


Published by David McKay, the Prince Valiant Feature Book (#26, 1941) reprints early Sunday strips in color. The cover features the only original art Hal Foster ever did for any comic book.

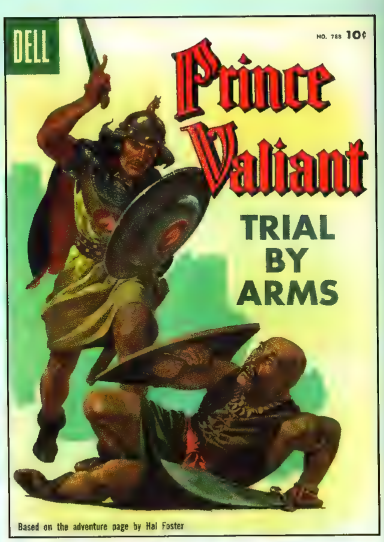
The Game of Valor, produced by Transogram in 1954, was one of the many merchandising items produced in the wake of the film's release. Sets with all playing pieces intact are scarce.

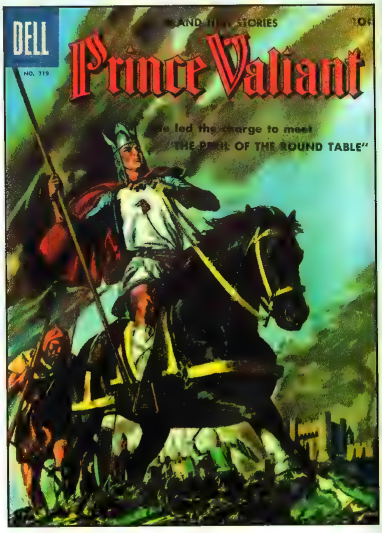
The Prince Valiant and Princess Aleta paper doll book was published by Saalfield in 1954 and is as exquisitely rendered as it is rare.

Mattel Toys issued the jeweled sword, scabbard, and shield (not pictured) in 1954. Few still exist as most were destroyed in battle.

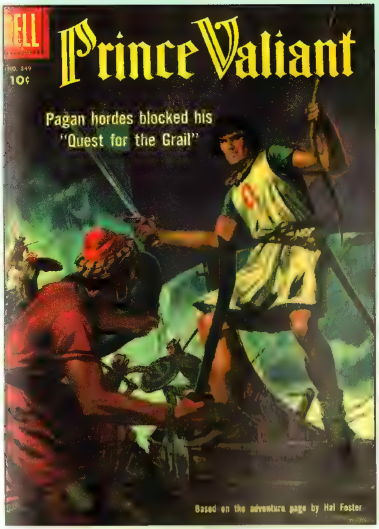


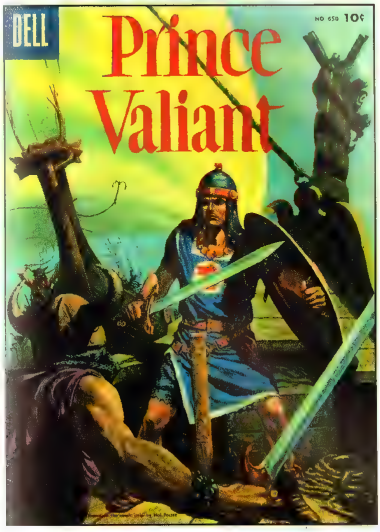
Featuring a dynamic painted cover depicting Val's search for "The Secret of the Flames," **Four Color #699** (Apr 1956, BELOW) was the third Dell issue. **FC #699** and **#719** were both issued the same year as **Showcase #4.**





Four Color #719 (Aug 1956, RIGHT) offered "The Peril of the Round Table" while **Four Color #788** (Apr 1957, ABOVE RIGHT) published eight months later proclaimed on its cover "based on the adventure page by Hal Foster."

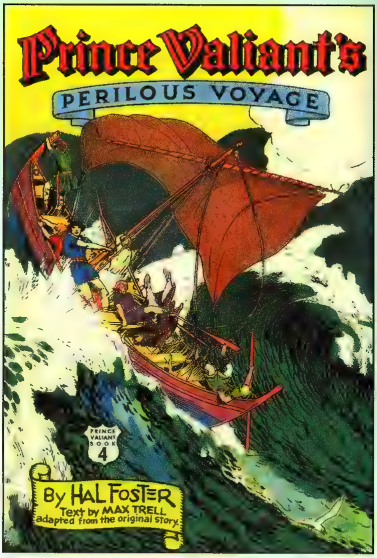


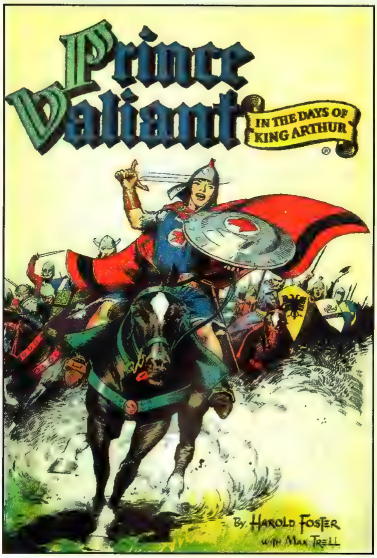


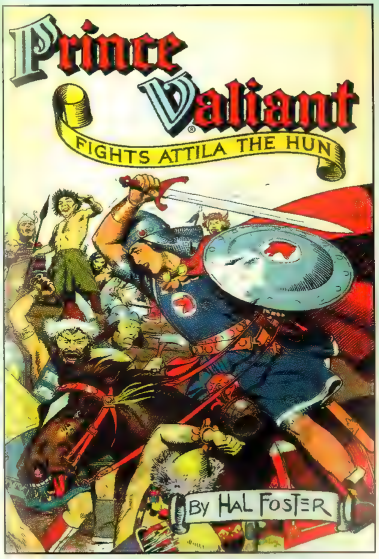
The last Dell issue (FC #900, May 1958) featured a fabulous painted cover, with Fujitani again handling the inside art. The covers of FC #650, #849, and #900 all harken back to Prince Valiant's Viking origins.

Decades before the third Indiana Jones film, Prince Valiant launched his own "Quest for the Grail" in **Four Color** #849 (UPPER LEFT) the sixth Dell issue. FC #650, the first painted cover (LEFT), was executed with incredible detail and is considered by many hobbyists to be the most beautiful and collectible of the seven Dell covers. Overstreet currently lists this mid-'50s gem for only $18 in FN.

In 1952 Hastings House produced a seven-volume set of Prince Valiant hardcover books packaged in dust jackets of superb design. They also feature illustrations taken from original Sunday strip panels







ALL COVERS ART, LOGOS, AND CHARACTERS © 1997 KING FEATURES SYN

The Hastings House Prince Valiant seven-volume hardcover set is becoming more and more difficult to assemble. Pictured this page: Volume #5 (ABOVE), #2 (ABOVE LEFT), #6 (LEFT). Shown on facing page: Volume #7 (LEFT), #4 (UPPER RIGHT), and #1 (LOWER RIGHT). Not shown: Volume #3.

King Comics began publishing their **Flash Gordon** title in the Fall of 1966 after Gold Key published its one-shot in the Summer of 1965. Charlton took over the series with issue #12, and Gold Key returned as publisher with issue #19. Shown here are the four covers done by Al Williamson... King's **Flash Gordon** #1 (UPPER LEFT), and issues #3-5 (BELOW). The background is from the 1980 Williamson-rendered movie adaptation comic.

ALL COVERS & COMIC BOOK CHARACTERS © 1997 KING FEATURES SYN.

Continued from page 23

Williamson: Probably washing dishes.

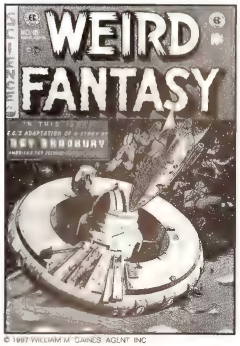
Ringgenberg: *Do you think you're going to stay with comics for a few more years?*

Williamson: As long as they'll have me.

Ringgenberg: *So, you don't plan on retiring?*

Williamson: I suspect that there won't be any money around to retire on, so I'll be working until... well, they'll either have to shoot me, or I'll die at the drawing board, one or the other.

Ringgenberg: *Can you say something about Roy Krenkel's influence? I guess it was tough on you when he died...*



Williamson: Oh, he was a great artist. He was like all artists, very insecure and not at all sure of himself. He never, never pulled anyone down. He always had something good to say about whoever we were talking about. He influenced me, I've said this before; he influenced me and not only artwise. He introduced me to the greats of the illustration field. He introduced me to J.C. Coll, and that led to Segrelles, and he introduced me to Fortuno Matagna's work. And not only that, but he also influenced some of my thinking and some of my characters. We all had a friendship with one another individually. My relationship with Angelo revolved around movies a lot, and music. My relationship with Roy was collecting and art, you know, and with Frank (Frazetta) it was art, and we both appreciated Frank Sinatra and chasing girls.

Ringgenberg: *What about collaborating with Krenkel at EC...*

Williamson: We knew EC was doing some interesting stuff, above the average comic book work. The EC stuff was different... in a way it was like being above the crowd.

I had gotten a few pages of Dan Dare from England, and there was some great science fiction stuff in them, weird foliage, real alien stuff, and Roy was really taken with it. He said, 'My God, this is the first time I've seen real alien foliage. It looks alien, it looks real. Look at this stuff!'

And I'd gotten this job, "Food For Thought," which I laid out. It was the only job I laid out for EC before it was lettered. Because I knew it was my last job, and I said please, and they said, 'Okay, but make it simple and don't do any fancy stuff with the balloons or anything.' So, that kind of inspired Roy to do that beautiful splash, which he took home.

I didn't touch the splash. And then he called me, and said, 'Well, I've done the splash, but it needs your touch, Williamson. It needs a flying snake. You're the only man who knows how to do a flying snake.'

I never drew a flying snake before in my life, you know, and he brings this thing over, beautifully finished. I did the insert panel, that's all mine. And I did the title lettering. Anyway, there's this little spot he leaves, and I draw the flying snake in and ink it in, and he finishes up around it and says, 'That's a flying snake! It makes the whole picture.' Leave it to Roy to say something like that.

Ringgenberg: *How did you work together in "Water World," that story you guys did for* Creepy*?*

Williamson: I have his tracings on that. I was working on ghosting strips at that time, so I gave Roy the pages with rough layouts, already lettered and I said, 'Just lay out whatever you want on this, and then I'll get back to it.' So, he did all this stuff on tracing paper, beautifully. And he drew the figures and everything. But I changed the figures. I used his backgrounds and put figures in, and I inked everything.

Ringgenberg: *Who are your favorites regular EC artists?*

Williamson: Wally Wood is always number one for me... and Reed Crandall. And of course Johnny Craig is very, very good too.

Ringgenberg: *What has Flash Gordon meant to you over the years?*

Williamson: I first saw the serial and then the strip. As I looked at it, I realized how good the drawing was, and how much I liked looking at the pictures, especially the figure work. Not only that, he was my hero. Of course, I was only ten years old, but I was always aware of the elegance of the strip. I've always admired the drawing of Raymond's... that capability of his to draw classy-looking comic strip panels. But, let's face it, the strip when Raymond did it had pretty dull stories. But because it was the first, everybody was quite amazed by it. However, by today's standards, it's dull as hell, but the ideas are interest-

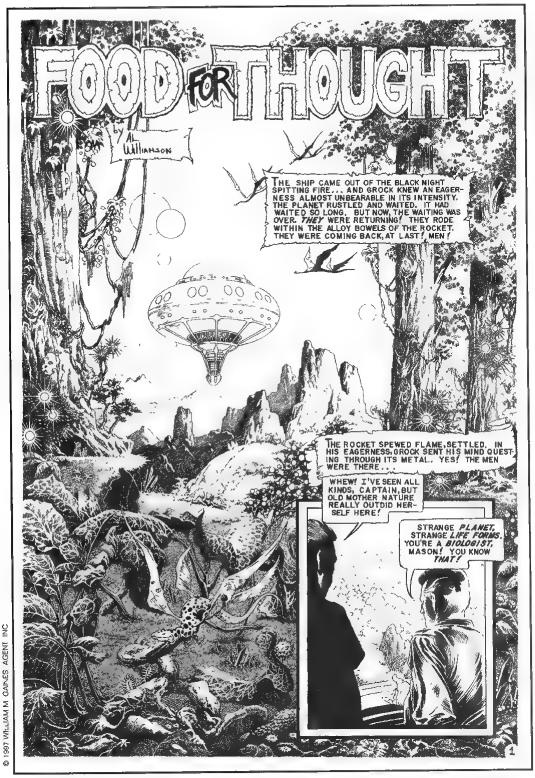
The cover of Weird Fantasy #18 is a rare collaboration between Al Williamson and Al Feldstein.

Al and his son Victor taken at a small airport in Pennsylvania (circa 1991).

ing and his drawing is superb, so lovely to look at. It's a shame you can't get decent reproductions of the stuff.

Ringgenberg: *You actually got to meet Alex Raymond, didn't you?*

Williamson: I had just started working professionally. I had been in the business for six months or so, but I wasn't doing much… mostly goofing off. He was very, very nice. He spent about two hours with me; my God, he spent *two hours* with me, and he didn't do any work. The pressure on the strip is a killer! That was awful nice of him!


FOOD FOR THOUGHT
Williamson
THE SHIP CAME OUT OF THE BLACK NIGHT SPITTING FIRE... AND GROCK KNEW AN EAGERNESS ALMOST UNBEARABLE IN ITS INTENSITY. THE PLANET HUSTLED AND WAITED. IT HAD WAITED SO LONG. BUT NOW THE WAITING WAS OVER. THEY WERE RETURNING! THEY RODE WITHIN THE ALLOY BOWELS OF THE ROCKET. THEY WERE COMING BACK, AT LAST, MEN!
THE ROCKET SPEWED FLAME, SETTLED. IN HIS EAGERNESS, GROCK SENT HIS MIND QUESTING THROUGH ITS METAL. YES! THE MEN WERE THERE!
WHEW! I'VE SEEN ALL KINDS, CAPTAIN, BUT OLD MOTHER NATURE REALLY OUTDID HERSELF HERE!
STRANGE PLANET, STRANGE LIFE FORMS, YOU'RE A BIOLOGIST, MASON! YOU KNOW THAT?
© 1997 WILLIAM M. GAINES AGENT INC

Roy Krenkel got this EC classic off to a good start by drawing most of the awesome splash panel.

Ringgenberg: *Did he look at any of your stuff?*

Williamson: Yes, and he liked it. He said to me words to the effect of, 'Oh, gee, it's a shame you didn't come up to see me about three months ago. But the assistant I have now is an excellent letterer.' It's like 'Does that mean if I had come up three months ago, you would've hired me?' But I didn't say anything!

Ringgenberg: *How is your lettering, Al?'*

Williamson: Bad! (*Laughter*) But Raymond was a good egg, a real gentleman. He and Foster were the gods of everyone. And both were very nice gentlemen.

Ringgenberg: *What do you remember about the short stint you did working for Dan Barry on Flash Gordon?*

Williamson: Oh, I was doing mostly layouts on tracing paper. And then I'd trace them onto the lightbox for him, and then he'd tighten them up and ink them. I inked some things in the backgrounds. Not too much. And Roy (Krenkel) did a couple of nice panels for him, really nice machinery stuff. And that only lasted two or three weeks. It was more like a goof-off thing, like, hey, let's have some fun.

Ringgenberg: *You'd go over and pitch in with Barry and help him bash out a couple of strips?*

Williamson: Yeah. In fact, he came over to my house a couple of times. When I was working on my EC work, he'd come over a couple of times with his work, and Roy came over. And we all worked together in my living room there… met the deadline, finishing up the stuff. I remember Roy working on the machinery. I remember Barry asking me to do a panel in the background–one of the kids dreaming. I drew a rocketship with the stars and all that. And I laid out a lot of the stuff on tracing paper, the action stuff, figures running around and things like that, kids that he had in the strip. I remember him complaining that I didn't tighten up the hands. 'Christ, why don't you tighten up the hands? They're the most difficult,' I said. 'Yeah, I know, that's why I didn't tighten them up.' (*Laughter*) But we had a good time. It was fun.

Ringgenberg: *How did you feel when King offered you the* Flash Gordon *book in the mid-'60s?*

Williamson: I was very happy. I knew it wouldn't sell, but I wanted to do it. I went up to Gold Key originally, because I'd heard that they were doing Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon. At that time I was working as an assistant to a couple of cartoonists in the business, and I took my stuff up there and said, 'Gee, you've got a new Flash, I'd like to do it.' They said, 'Oh, we're going to use reprints. But we'll remember this.' And I think I did a horror job for them at the time. And then the editor who I went up to see gave me a call a couple of years later. He said, 'How would you like to do Flash?' I said, 'Gee, great. Is Gold Key going to do it?' He said, 'No, I'm working for King now.' So that's how that got started. I didn't want to stay with the comic book, because I didn't particularly care for the stories that were being written at the time. These were not the ones that Archie (Goodwin) wrote. Archie wrote the good stuff. But they had a couple of other writers

Two pages from "Water World," a collaboration for Creepy by Al Williamson and Roy Krenkel. Krenkel drew the wonderful backgrounds of a many-spired city and exotic undersea plants. This was one of Al and Roy's last jobs together.

that I didn't particularly care for. They were nice stories, but they weren't for me. They weren't Flash as I saw him.

Ringgenberg: *You got to write a couple of scripts yourself.*

Williamson: Well, sort of. They were actually rip-offs of other stories. (*Laughter*) I can't write. But I was desperate on one. "The Mole Machine" is right out of Stan Pitt's Silver Star.

Ringgenberg: *The whole idea of a city at the center of the Earth has been used by quite a few writers.*

Williamson: Oh, yeah, but the point was, I took it right from Stan Pitt. But he forgave me. He thought it was wonderful. When he saw it, he loved it.

Ringgenberg: *What is your approach to the character of Flash Gordon, as you've done it over the years?*

Williamson: Well, basically, it's to try to go as close to Raymond as possible, adding my own touches here and there. It's a character that I feel comfortable with. He's the reason I became an artist–Alex Raymond's drawing. But, first and foremost, the fact that he was my hero.

Kids have anti-heroes today, like Wolverine. My hero was Flash Gordon. I treat him with a lot of affection. The drawing may not be up to snuff, but I feel that the fact that I love the strip so much, the whole idea of Flash, I think maybe it shows, and the reader is attracted by that. This new (1995) Flash Gordon series is welcome because I don't like drawing superheroes, and I've been inking them for about ten years.

Muscular and intense other worldly action from the "dream-team" of Al Williamson and Frank Frazetta.

Ringgenberg: *What do think about the idea of updating characters?*

IT'S UNLIKE ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE.
NOW ENVISION THIS BUILDING ON TOP OF A HILL IN A NORMAL CITY. IMAGINE IT AS AN APARTMENT OR OFFICE BUILDING. WHAT WOULD BE WRONG?
WELL, FOR ONE THING, IT WOULD BE AWFULLY DANGEROUS NOT TO HAVE A RAILING AROUND THE TERRACE FOR SOMETHING THIS HIGH ABOVE GROUND.
EXACTLY!
DON'T YOU SEE... THIS BUILDING WAS NOT CONSTRUCTED TO BE ABOVE WATER. IT WAS MEANT TO EXIST JUST AS WE SEE IT NOW.
YOU MEAN THERE MIGHT HAVE ONCE BEEN PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY LIVED PERMANENTLY UNDERWATER?
NOT ONLY MIGHT HAVE BEEN... WE'VE NO PROOF AS YET THAT THEY DON'T STILL LIVE HERE
BUT SO FAR THERE'S NO SIGN OF LIFE.
JUST THE SAME, FROM HERE ON, I THINK WE'D BETTER PROCEED WITH CAUTION
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT; ALTHOUGH I CAN'T REALLY HAVE ANY FEELING OTHER THAN THAT THIS IS SOME REMNANT OF A CIVILIZATION THAT'S BEEN EXTINCT FOR CENTURIES.
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT; BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE MY KNIFE READY JUST IN CASE!

THE GLINT OF STEEL HAS A CHANCE TO REFLECT THE SUNLIGHT FROM ABOVE FOR ONLY A MOMENT. THEN, SUDDENLY, A DOZEN SCALY ARMS REACH OUT OF THE SHADOWS...
SWIFTLY, SILENTLY, THE TWO SURFACE PEOPLE ARE CARRIED INTO THE WEIRD STRUCTURE; AND THROUGH NUMEROUS INTRICATE PASSAGEWAYS
SO TWO MORE OF THE SURFACE DWELLERS HAVE ENTERED OUR DOMAIN. IT HAS BEEN LONG SINCE THE LAST ONES WERE HERE. IS THE LANGUAGE THAT WE LEARNED FROM THEM STILL FAMILIAR TO YOU?
WE REALIZE THAT YOU MUST SOON RETURN TO YOUR OWN WORLD FOR AIR... THAT YOU ARE NOT FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO REMAIN AMONG US I'M AFRAID MY PEOPLE WERE A BIT IMPETUOUS. AS SOON AS THEY SAW YOUR KNIFE, THEY THOUGHT IT BEST TO DISARM YOU. WE MADE A RULING AGAINST HAVING WEAPONS IN THIS CIVILIZATION MANY YEARS AGO... RELYING TOTALLY UPON OUR CAMOUFLAGING DOMES TO REMAIN HIDDEN TO THE UPPER WORLD. WE ARE IN REALITY A PEACE-LOVING PEOPLE AND HAVE NO DESIRE TO BRING YOU HARM.
YES, WE CAN HEAR YOU, SOMEHOW, AND UNDERSTAND YOU. BUT... HOW LONG HAVE YOUR PEOPLE BEEN LIVING HERE... AND WHAT DO YOU INTEND DOING WITH US?

© 1997 WARREN PUBL.

Williamson: Well, I think it all depends on who and how they update what. I didn't see the DC books so I can't really comment on them. I always feel though that when somebody creates a character like Alex created Flash, and Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster created Superman, you shouldn't mess with them, you know? These really famous characters have become part of Americana, you can't really… you shouldn't mess with them. You shouldn't mess with Tarzan, you shouldn't mess with Flash Gordon, and you shouldn't mess with Prince Valiant.

These characters were created by people who really had a feel for it, and if you're doing a character created by someone else, and especially if you like the art, and even if you don't care for it, you should try to keep it the same. And you should respect the creator of any strip or character you're drawing. You shouldn't debase him or anything of that nature, you should try to keep the spirit in which the character was originally created.

Ringgenberg: *Do you think Flash Gordon as a character is important to comics?*

Williamson: I think so. If it hadn't been for Flash, we wouldn't have superheroes as we know them today. I mean all that is done is really right out of Flash Gordon, for God sake."

Ringgenberg: *Do you think Flash was more of an inspiration because of Raymond's drawing or was it also the kind of adventure stories that Raymond told in the strip that inspired people, too?*

Williamson: Well, I think it was both, but especially the drawing. When Alex did Flash, suddenly all that vitality just caught everybody by storm. Nobody was doing that kind of stuff; it was full of action, and just incredible… and it still holds up today. It's better than ever. Well, the good guys just get better, you know, Foster and Raymond, people like that, they just get better with age.

Ringgenberg: *Do you admire the purity of Flash Gordon as a hero? There's no ambiguity about him. He knows what he's supposed to do and does it.*

Williamson: Yeah, he's a good guy. Yeah, I kind of like to see people like that. I like to see people who are honest. I like to see people who are noble. There's nothing wrong with that. I have friends who are like that, very noble and upfront people, very straight and very honest. And I've also met some of the other people, too.

A scene from the climax of the Flash Gordon movie adaptation shows Flash closing in on the wounded Ming the Merciless–as Dale looks on.

FLASH GORDON © 1997 KING FEATURES SYN. FLASH GORDON THE MOVIE © 1997 WESTERN PUBL

Ringgenberg: *I always thought Flash Gordon was more like John Carter than Buck Rogers–it wasn't so much the technology…*

Williamson: That's right. Alex Raymond, as a young kid, read the John Carter books. A friend of mine is doing a book on Alex. He's working with the family and he's got an interview where Alex talks about reading John Carter of Mars and Tarzan by Edgar Rice Burroughs. So he did read Burroughs and was a fan. That's kind of nice.

Ringgenberg: *How specifically do you think Raymond influenced what you do?*

Williamson: Well, the figures–I always admired artists who could draw figures well. Alex did some of the best figures. And Reed Crandall certainly did fine figures on Blackhawk back in the '40s Figure drawing is hard… it's hard to draw a heroic figure.

Ringgenberg: *Is Raymond's influence one reason why you do so many full-figure characters?*

Williamson: Yeah… I enjoy drawing figures more than close-ups or things of that nature. I've said before that Flash Gordon is a figure strip. And unfortunately, I can't think of any artist who has done Flash Gordon, except maybe Briggs, who has followed in that tradition of drawing figures.

Ringgenberg: *Do you like Mac Raboy's Flash Gordon work?*

Williamson: Not too much, no. That's really not very fair to say because I admire Mac Raboy. He did beautiful work in comic books–really lovely stuff–some of his covers were gorgeous. So when I say I didn't care for his Flash Gordon, that doesn't mean that I didn't care for his work.

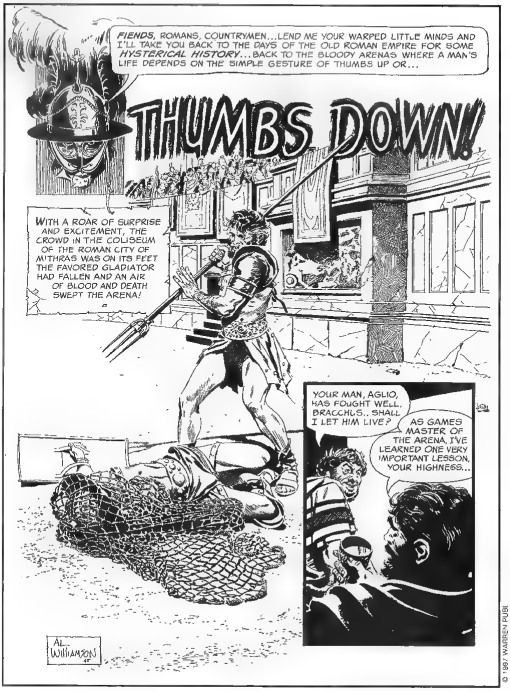
They got him to change the format of the Sunday page, where instead of six panels, he had nine panels–everything was crushed. He couldn't do anything where he could show off his work. He had all those little panels to work on, that's not his fault.

Ringgenberg: *What about when Dan Barry did it?*

Williamson: I was impressed by the Dan Barry stuff when it first came out–very impressed. He was a very good story teller, and a very good artist, but not in the same league as Raymond. He's a completely different kind of artist. I'm not saying that he's bad, not at all, only that he's different and that he's an excellent storyteller. He's a good man, and I enjoyed some of his stories very much, but to me they weren't Flash. If anyone did modernize Flash or keep him up to date, it was Barry, and he did a good job.

Ringgenberg: *And now young artists cite you as an influence. I know, for instance, that Dave Stevens and Bill Stout have been inspired by you. When Stout and Stevens went to see* Star Wars, *they saw Han Solo and Luke Skywalker, and they said, 'Look, they're Williamson guys!'*

Williamson: Well, that's nice. Yeah, I heard all about that, and I figured it was all baloney. I figured, what does George Lucas know about comics? Why would he be interested in comics?


FIENDS, ROMANS, COUNTRYMEN…LEND ME YOUR WARPED LITTLE MINDS AND I'LL TAKE YOU BACK TO THE DAYS OF THE OLD ROMAN EMPIRE FOR SOME HYSTERICAL HISTORY…BACK TO THE BLOODY ARENAS WHERE A MAN'S LIFE DEPENDS ON THE SIMPLE GESTURE OF THUMBS UP OR…
THUMBS DOWN!
WITH A ROAR OF SURPRISE AND EXCITEMENT, THE CROWD IN THE COLISEUM OF THE ROMAN CITY OF MITHRAS WAS ON ITS FEET THE FAVORED GLADIATOR HAD FALLEN AND AN AIR OF BLOOD AND DEATH SWEPT THE ARENA!
YOUR MAN, AGLIO, HAS FOUGHT WELL, BRACCHUS…SHALL I LET HIM LIVE?
AS GAMES MASTER OF THE ARENA, I'VE LEARNED ONE VERY IMPORTANT LESSON, YOUR HIGHNESS…
AL WILLIAMSON
© 1981 WARREN PUB.

Ringgenberg: *Apparently he was. So how is Mark Schultz writing this new Flash Gordon for you? Is he writing the full script?*

Williamson: A full script, yeah. Which is okay with me; it's the way God intended comics should be written! I had an idea that I wanted to do and I told him exactly what it was, and he loved it. But he had the hard job of writing it, and he did a good job.

Ringgenberg: *How are you dividing up your time, Al, with this new work? Are you still allocating a certain number of days a week to inking?*

Williamson: Yeah, I ink maybe two days a week, and then the rest of the time I work on Flash.

Ringgenberg: *That brings up another question. Are you using any photos for reference?*

Williamson: No. Not so far. I have to fall back on talent and make this one up.

Splash page for "Thumbs Down" from Creepy. Warren magazines really recreated the EC feeling and used many of the EC artists. Here, Williamson draws the "Roman stuff" he's so fond of and does so well.

ROCKETED FROM THE DOOMED PLANET KRYPTON, THE INFANT KAL-EL GREW UP TO BECOME EARTH'S GREATEST SUPER-HERO... AS WELL AS AN UNASSUMING, MILD-MANNERED REPORTER! NOW, THE IMPOSSIBLE BECOMES TRUE, AS...
DC COMICS PRESENTS
SUPERMAN AND CLARK KENT
Created by JERRY SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER
WHY DON'T YOU JUST ADMIT IT, SUPERMAN? YOU'VE BEEN LAYING INTO ME FOR A GOOD HALF HOUR AND I'M STILL TAKING IT--
--AND I'LL KEEP ON TAKING IT FOR AS LONG AS YOU DISH IT OUT... BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING THAT CAN STOP -- THE ERG-MASTER!
UH-HUH. THAT'S WHAT I HEAR FROM EVERY TWO-BIT THUG WITH DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR AND A GIMMICK!
"Superman--Meet Clark Kent!"
PAUL KUPPERBERG WRITER
CURT SWAN PENCILLER
AL WILLIAMSON GUEST-INKER
BEN ODA LETTERER
GENE D'ANGELO COLORIST
JULIUS SCHWARTZ EDITOR
2
© 1997 DC COMICS

Julie Schwartz helped start Al's "new" career as a superhero inker when he suggested that Williamson could work over Curt Swan's Superman pencils. This spash is from **DC Comics Presents** #79 (Mar 1985).

Ringgenberg: *Does that mean you're going to be making up the costumes and the architecture out of your head?*

Williamson: Absolutely. Well, I mean if I get an idea from somebody's illustration on a costume or something, you know, I'll take a bit from there, a bit from another guy. But basically so far all the stuff I've done, I've done from scratch.

Ringgenberg: *I know that sometimes when you were doing Secret Agent Corrigan you would use a photo reference.*

Williamson: Oh, yeah, well, civilian stuff is hard to draw, so I would lay out the whole week and photograph all the stuff I needed. That was a tremendous help.

Ringgenberg: *Do you have your own darkroom?*

Williamson: No. I use a Polaroid. Of course now they don't make black and white Polaroid film for my camera–so that's why I have to fall back on talent and make it up.

Ringgenberg: *How is the strip coming?*

Williamson: It's slow, but I'm having fun. I'm not breaking the T-square over the desk. I'm not tearing up drawings

BY GEORGE!!
NORTH OF BEIRUT, IN LEBANON, IN OCTOBER OF 1972, TWO ARCHAEOLOGISTS WILL BE DIGGING FOR RELICS OF THE ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS THAT ONCE FLOURISHED IN THAT AREA! THEIR EXCAVATIONS WILL UNCOVER A STRANGE OBJECT... SOMEWHAT RESEMBLING A LARGE BUILDING BLOCK! UPON IT, ETCHED INTO THE CUBE'S SMOOTH SURFACES, WILL BE...
LOOK, ALAN! INSCRIPTIONS! THEY COVER FIVE OF THE CUBE'S SIX FACES!
CAN YOU TRANSLATE, MARVIN?
THE ARCHAEOLOGIST NAMED MARVIN WILL EXAMINE THE MARKINGS CAREFULLY AND THEN ANNOUNCE...
THIS IS NOT A FAMILIAR ANCIENT LANGUAGE, ALAN! IT...IT SEEMS ALMOST ALIEN! LET ME KEEP THE CUBE AND WORK ON IT! PERHAPS...IN TIME...I CAN DECIPHER ITS INSCRIPTIONS!
AS YOU WISH, MARVIN! IT'S OF NO VALUE TO US AS IS! PERHAPS WHAT IS WRITTEN UPON IT WILL BE! KEEP IT, THEN! COME! LET US CONTINUE DIGGING!

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or anything like that. So I'm comfortable with it, enjoying it. I work on five pages at a time, and it takes me about two weeks to do five pages.

Ringgenberg: *Does the cult aspect of the 1980 movie help keep Flash alive?*

Williamson: I think it killed it. The Dino DeLaurentis film was pretty grim.

Ringgenberg: *Did the way they were camping up the material offend you?*

Williamson: The whole thing offended me. I don't know why… they had this wonderful character, this wonderful stuff they could have done, and they missed the boat completely. The whole thing was just a debacle.

Ringgenberg: *Al, in closing, let me ask, do you think this will be your last shot at Flash Gordon?*

Williamson: Oh, I have no idea–one thing at a time. At my age you can't plan ahead too much. We'll see.

Ringgenberg: *Thanks for taking time to chat, Al.*

Williamson: Oh, my pleasure, Steve. ■

Williamson splash page for the memorable "By George!" from Weird Fantasy #15 (Sep/Oct 1952).

Classic Williamson sci-fi from the old "mushroom master."

THE SEARCH GOES ON!

The 35¢ Price Puzzle

Making sense of Bronze Age Marvel Price Variants

BY JON MCCLURE

All of my life I've loved comic books. Some people date their childhood memories by grade school events, others by their family vacations. Mine are marked by the issues I was buying on the stand. Some of my best times as a kid involved the comics I earned by doing extra chores, comics like *Brave & Bold* #109 starring Batman and The Demon, with art by Jim Aparo. I remember standing in line at the local Circle K, impatiently waiting to slam down my 21¢ (with tax) on the counter, race home and sequester myself in my room where I could read it cover to cover and enter the magical world of comics.

My interest in comic books has continued to grow over the years, and with it, a curiosity about comic storytelling, format, design, etc. Of particular interest to me are books that never saw publication due to cancellation, or that have mistakes, or double covers, different back covers (like the Dell Annuals), or different cover prices (like the Dell and Gold Key price variants familiar to many collectors). That's one of the reasons I noticed the scarce but normal-looking comics discussed in the following paragraphs. In fact, some of them could also be hiding right in your collection right now!

Marvel Comics started the 1970s with a 15¢ cover price, and closed the decade with a 40¢ cover price. Such changes seemed big at the time, and are, if you consider that comics cost 10¢ until the early '60s and 12¢ until the late '60s, but that's another story. As a quick review, consider the following Marvel cover price timeline:

Marvels cover dated Dec 1971-
Apr 1974... 20¢ covers
Marvels cover dated May 1974-
Aug 1976... 25¢ covers
Marvels cover dated Sep 1976-
Oct 1977... 30¢ covers
Marvels cover dated Nov 1977-
Apr 1979... 35¢ covers.

Some exceptions are Annuals or other Giant-Size comics like *What If?* and *Marvel Classics Comics*. Another exception is *Spidey Super Stories*, first published October 1974, which ran with a 35¢ cover price from its inception. Such are the facts as we knew them.

The first clue that Marvel was releasing comics with different cover prices came in 1979. The *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* #9 (1979) mentions a 35¢ cover variation of a 30¢ comic: *Star Wars* #1 (July 1977), "35 cent cover price; limited distribution." Then in 1988, *Overstreet* #18

mentions *Iron Fist* #15 with a "35 cent edition." In 1992 *Overstreet* #22 listed *X-Men* #106 as "35¢ issues exist." Sixteen years after the *Star Wars* #1 listing, *Overstreet* #25 (1995) listed *Star Wars* #2-4 (August to October 1977), "35 cents with UPC code; not reprints." *Star Wars* #1, 35¢ cover, is listed as possibly having "1,500 copies?" I suspect issues #2-4 must be quite uncommon to have taken so long to surface.

Always hoping I would come across something unusual, imagine my excitement earlier this year when I discovered a 35¢ cover variation of *Godzilla* #2 from September 1977! I knew that there had to be other Marvel titles with 35¢ covers!

Since I just happen to have a few thousand Bronze Age comics laying around, I started looking for more examples. I was stunned to discover that the *Champions* #15 (September 1977), and *The Invaders* #21 (October 1977), also exist with a 35¢ cover price!

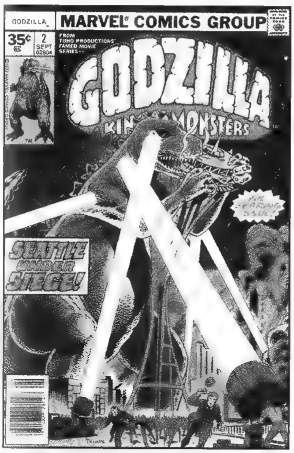
Marvel Comics was experimenting with a price increase months before they raised the price to 35¢ on all books cover dated November 1977. There is no other reason for such books to exist. I began looking through Marvel comics from 1977 wherever I could, but no new examples were to be found. I wanted to find more, but I also knew that

in order for these mutant comics to have evaded notice for 20 years, the supply must be thin.

I can already hear comments from some collectors: "So what? Maybe Marvel figured the *Star Wars* movie was so popular they'd try out 35¢ covers starting in July, and used other minor titles to add a few last minute 35¢ covers on issues cover dated September and October. That doesn't mean there's more of these comics."

I wondered if that were true myself until I traced all three examples to the same purchase! They had come from the same lot of approximately 800 comics. I suddenly remembered that I'd set aside about 150 comics to read from that 800, and that I'd neglected to check through the 150 comics!

My heart beating faster, I went to the closet



and pulled out the short box of "readers." Please, I thought, please let there be just one more. I decided to look through the box in three sections of 50 books each. The first group I flipped through was mostly DC and Gold Key, so no help there. The second group had plenty of 1970's Marvels, but all of them had normal 30¢ covers, exactly like the ones in *Gerber's Photo-Journal Guide to Marvel Comics* (that's right, don't bother, I've already checked).

I picked up the third pile and began looking. I was only four or five issues in when fate dealt me an ace-of-spades. As it turns out, *Star Wars* #1 (July 1977, is not the first 35¢ cover variation! The third pile had produced the best comic of all: *Marvel Two-In-One* #28 (June 1977), with a 35¢ cover price! I now believe it is the earliest cover price variant known!

The following list of 184 books and 52 titles are Marvel Comics published between the months of June and October 1977 which might have 35¢ cover variations. Issue numbers in Brackets denote 35¢ cover variations confirmed to exist.

Amazing Spider-Man #169-73 (6-10/77)
Avengers #160-64 (6-10/77
Black Panther #4-5 (7, 9/77)
Captain America #210-14 (6-10/77)
Captain Marvel #51-52 (7, 9/77)
Champions [#15] #14-15 (7, 9/77)
Conan #75-79 (6-10/77)
Daredevil #146-148 (6-7, 9/77)
Defenders #48-52 (6-10/77)
Doctor Strange #23-25 (6, 8, 10/77)
Eternals #12-16 (6-10/77)
Fantastic Four #183-187 (6-10/77)
Flintstones #1 (10/77)
Ghost Rider #24-26 (6, 8, 10/77)
Godzilla [#2] #1-3 (8-10/77)
Howard The Duck #13-17 (6-10/77)
Human Fly #1-2 (9-10/77)
Incredible Hulk #212-216 (6-10/77)
Inhumans #11-12 (6, 8/77)
Invaders [#21] #17-21 (6-10/77)
Iron Fist [#15] #13-15 (6, 8-9/77)
Iron Man #99-103 (6-10/77)
John Carter #1-5 (6-10/77)
Kid Colt Outlaw #218-220 (6, 8, 10/77)
Kull #21-23 (6, 8, 10/77)
Logan's Run #6-7 (6-7/77)
Marvel Premiere #36-38 (6, 8, 10/77)
Marvel Presents #11-12 (6, 8/77)
Marvel Super Action #2-3 (7, 9/77)
Marvel Super Heroes #65-66 (7, 9/77)
Marvel Tales #80-84 (6-10/77)
Marvel Team-up #58-62 (6-10/77)
Marvel Triple Action #36-37 (7, 9/77)
Marvel Two-In-One [#28] #28-32 (6-10/77)
Marvel's Greatest Comics #71-73) (7, 9-10/77)
Master Of Kung-Fu #53-57 (6-10/77)
Ms. Marvel #6-10 (6-10/77)
Nova #10-14 (6-10/77)
Omega #9-10 (7, 10/77)
Powerman #44-47 (6-8, 10/77)
Rawhide Kid #140-141 (7, 9/77)
Red Sonja #4-5 (7, 9/77)

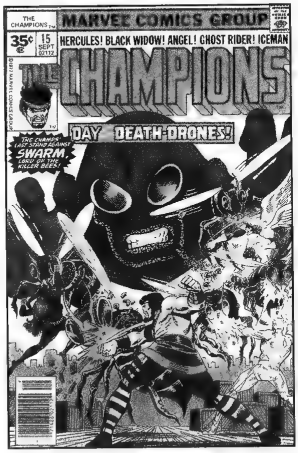
35¢ PRICE VARIANTS

ALL ART, COVERS, & CHARACTERS © 1997 MEG.

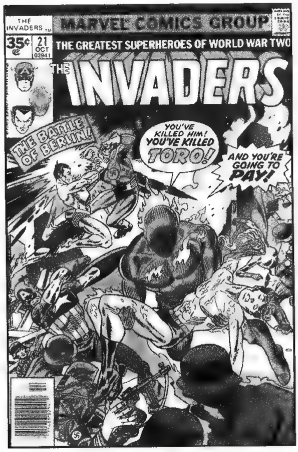
Scooby Doo #1 (10/77)
Sgt. Fury #141-142 (7, 9/77)
Spectacular Spiderman #7-11 (6-10/77)
Star Wars [#1-4] #1-4 (7-10/77)
Super-Villain Team-Up #12-14 (6, 8, 10/77)
Tarzan #1-5 (6-10/77)
Thor #260-264 (6-10/77)
Tomb Of Dracula # 57-60 (6-9/77)
2001 A Space Odyssey #7-10 (6-9/77)
X-Men [#106] #105-107 (6, 8, 10/77)

All of the 35¢ variations are regular copies on the inside, listed as "30 cents per copy" on the title page of the books, showing they were not published with 35¢ as the intended price. Except for *Champions*, a bi-monthly, all of the titles are monthly. The 35¢ cover books exist of seven different titles. 23 of the 184 comics on the list are reprint comics, but that doesn't exclude them. If you think your collection isn't complete anymore, brace yourself, because it gets worse. The list could grow bigger! Marvel made a lot of changes in 1977, publishing new titles, canceling others. Every month back in time means dozens of issues added to the list as well as new titles in the family of 35¢ variants. May 1977 would add *Weird Wonder Tales* #22. April 1977 would add *Marvel Spotlight* #33. March 1977 would add *Werewolf By Night* #43. February 1977 would add *Ka-Zar* #20 and *Son Of Satan* #8. You get the idea.

On the flip side, I'll point out some possibly confusing ads for price variant comics that don't exist. Look inside Marvel's fan publication *FOOM* #18 (June 1977, page 26) shows *Tomb Of Dracula* #61



(November 1977) with a 30¢ cover price. *FOOM* #19 (Fall 1977) shows *Howard The Duck* #20 (page 23), *Thor* #267 (page 30), and *Tomb Of Dracula* #62 (page 31), each dated January 1978 with 30¢ cover prices. Page 29 of that same issue even has a *Star Wars* #6 (December 1977) with a 30¢ cover price. Finally, in *FOOM* #20 (Winter 1978, page 36) shows *Tomb Of Dracula* #63 (March 1978) with a 30¢ cover price.


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE GREATEST SUPERHEROES OF WORLD WAR TWO
THE INVADERS
THE BATTLE OF BERLIN!
YOU'VE KILLED HIM! YOU'VE KILLED TORO!
AND YOU'RE GOING TO PAY!

How do I know these *FOOM*-advertised books don't exist? Because *FOOM* was direct advertising for nonexistent things to come. And because I just can't see anyone at Marvel saying, "Gee, I wonder if we can sell these for less than 35¢?"

After researching 1977 Marvels to my satisfaction, I questioned a few of the people in the comics industry who I thought might possibly might have heard of (or run across) price anomalies. Bill Alexander reminded me of the 35¢ variation of *Iron Fist* #15. Thanks, Bill!

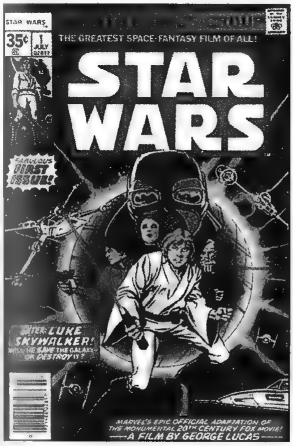
Robert Beerbohm told me that Marvel was definitely testing the market because they didn't want to suffer the same loss in sales that DC Comics suffered from the shift to 35¢. Bob saw some of the 35¢ variants, and claims to vaguely remember some 25¢ variants of 20¢ Marvels. Because of the way the giant printing presses (in

Sparta, Illinois) worked at the time, Beerbohm believes that some October 1977 variants may be more common because they might have stopped the presses (on the day of the price increase) and arbitrarily changed the cover price before continuing (presses which printed four to eight comics simultaneously). Marvel probably printed their variants on the same press, which means there are at least four to eight examples of 35¢ variants each month from June to October. Bob thinks the test marketing may have occurred in Dallas, Houston, or St. Louis. Thanks, Bob!

I'm convinced there's more "mutant" price variants out there and the evidence strongly suggests that there is. I'm hoping some *CBM* reader has (or finds) at least one book that predates *Marvel Two-In-One* #28. In fact, there may even be other (and earlier) Marvel price variation experiments in existence... perhaps even a 12¢ book with a 15¢ cover variation.

Should you not be a Marvel "True Believer" and dismiss price cover variations as a trivial matter, don't make the mistake of discussing your view with the army of radical Marvel completists out there. One slip of your tongue and it could be... "clobberin' time!" ■

Jon McClure has been involved with comic books as a collector, dealer, and researcher for 25 years. In real life Jon is sales manager for a music publishing company.


STAR WARS
35¢
THE GREATEST SPACE-FANTASY FILM OF ALL!
STAR WARS
MARVEL'S FIRST ISSUE!
ENTER: LUKE SKYWALKER!
MARVEL'S EPIC OFFICIAL ADAPTATION OF THE MOVIE WHICH 20TH CENTURY FOX MOVIES
A FILM BY GEORGE LUCAS

CBM 1997 SUMMER SCRAPBOOK

San Diego Comic Convention and The Annual AACC Banquet

This year's San Diego Comic con was a wonderful opportunity to meet national dealers, legendary artists and writers, and collectors from all over the world. Events of special significance were the DC war collector's dinner with special guests Russ Heath, Joe Kubert and Bob Haney; The Golden Age creators panel; the 2nd annual grading symposium and the American Association of Comicbook Collectors (AACC) annual banquet honoring Dick Ayers and with special guests Stan Lee, Will Eisner, Jim Mooney, Russ Heath, Don Rosa, George Tuska, Ramona Fradon, Shelly Moldoff, Marie Severin, Roz Kirby, and others. The following is just a sample of the many exciting moments at this year's 1997 San Diego Comic Convention.

1. Dealer/Collector Mark Wilson shows off a newly acquired high-grade copy of Golden Age Green Lantern #1.

2. Metamorpho artist Ramona Fradon reminisces with DC war comics writer Bob Haney.

3. Two eternally youthful comic book legends... Will Eisner and Joe Kubert.

4. George Tuska sketches for a fan.

5. CBM Associate Editor, Pat Calhoun discusses his passion for the old Atlas with Stan Lee.

6. CBG columnist Mark Evanier with comic book historian, Hanna-Barbera artist and collector Scott Shaw!

7. AACC President Jon Berk presents 1997 AACC Hall-Of-Fame award to Dick Ayers.

8. Doc Robinson, Keith Contarino, and nationally known collector, Mike Dalessandro.

9. Hawkman legend, Shelly Moldoff.

10. AACC 1997 Hall-Of-Famer, Dick Ayers.

11. Banquet attendees look on as Stan Lee presents AACC award to Dick Ayers.

12. Will Eisner chats with (L to R) Alan Bartholomew, Mick Rabin, and Steven Fears.

13. Eisner and Lee sign autographs for fans.

14. Brave & Bold legend... Russ Heath

15. (L to R) Steven Fears, new AACC Pres. Richard Evans, Joe Smejkal, and Dave Grisez.

16. Elaborate AACC Banquet table centerpiece emulates a real corner newsstand.

17. Phil Barnhart won the original banquet invite signed by all attending luminaries.

18. "Big-5 DC War" collector Chris Pedrin with AACC Sec./Treasurer Michael Naiman.

19. Gemstone Publishing's own Carol and Bob Overstreet pay tribute to Dick Ayers.

20. CBG editor Maggie Thompson

21. Disney Duck artist Don Rosa.

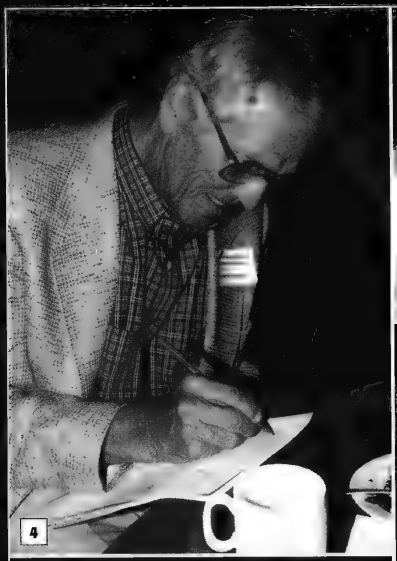
22. Legends George Tuska and Jim Mooney.

23. Jon Berk with legendary Marvel artist and colorist extraordinaire, Marie Severin.

24. Will Eisner signs commemorative CBM #50 for waiting fans.

25. Eisner and Lee pose with CBM Editor and Art Director.

26. Roz Kirby.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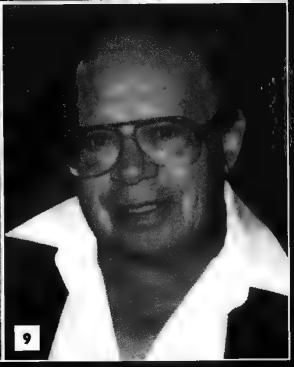
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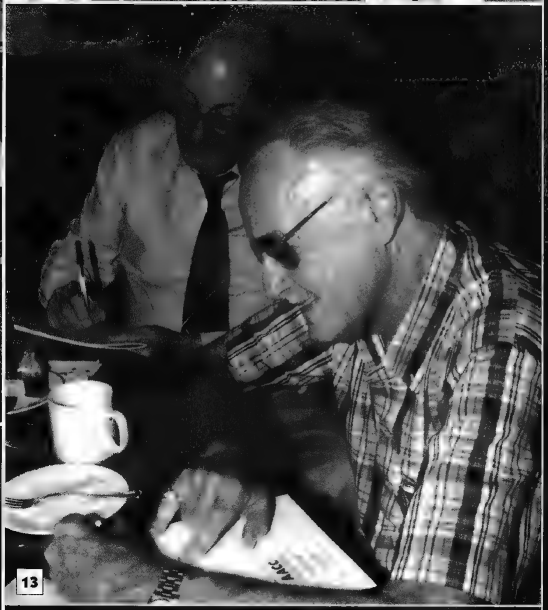
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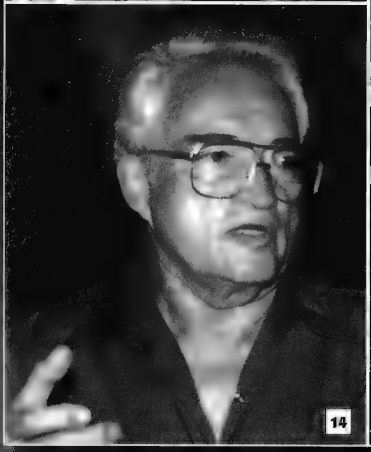
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AACC NEWSSTAND
Archie
CRIME SUSPENSTORIES
AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
CAPTAIN AMERICA
CLASSIC COMICS
EXCITING COMICS
FANTASTIC COMICS
BLACK CAT WESTERN
The Daily Planet
the Daily Bugle
AYERS WOWS SELLOUT CROWD!
AACC APPLAUDS AYERS
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You're Invited!
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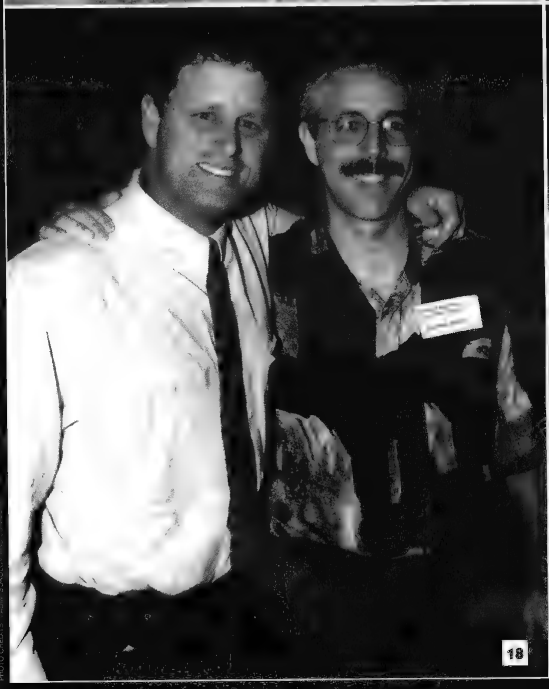
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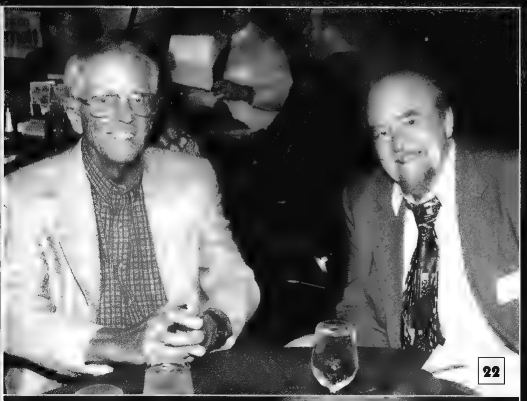
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SCHWARTZ
Continued from page 33

Editor E. Nelson Bridwell was the "in-house historian" of DC's Golden and Silver Age characters and concepts.

became more realistic. Julie told Carmine to put a yellow oval around the bat emblem on Batman's chest to highlight it, a design change that has stood the test of time. Also in *Detective Comics*, Julie replaced the Martian Manhunter back-up strip with the Elongated Man, a character Julie had helped establish in *Flash*.

But the most important aspect of Julie's "taking Batman back to his detective roots" was the reintroduction of the over-the-top villains: the Joker, the Penguin, Catwoman, and the Riddler. It was these stories that caught the eye of William Dozier, a producer for 20th Century Fox who went on to create the *Batman* TV show.

The "camp" (sock-pow-wham) phenomenon the TV show inspired, definitely boosted comics sales, but in many ways turned the rest of the Silver Age into a parody of its former self. And after the fad vanished in 1966, it was obvious that DC had yielded the silver crown to Marvel, whose characters were designed with an element of self-mockery that fit the ambivalence of the audience. Through these tough times Julie remained the perfect professional, turning out quality products, and DC weathered the cycle.

Julie paired a talented new writer and a talented new artist, putting the "team-up" of Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams on the "team-up" of Green Lantern and Green Arrow in 1970. The stories in this series (that appeared in *Green Lantern* #76-89) tackled such tough topics as race relations, drugs, and the economics of poverty. They also showed Julie spearheading an honest effort by DC to utilize ideas from the new generation of creators.

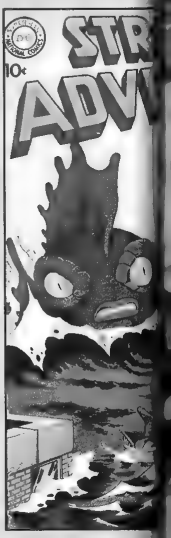
Later in 1970 Mort Weisinger surrendered the editorial helm of Superman, which he'd handled by himself since 1951 and for years before that in tandem with Jack Schiff. Julie was selected to succeed him. Julie "made some changes." He got rid of Kryptonite and the robot duplicates that Supe had been using to resolve secret identity crises. And he updated Clark Kent's job from newspaper reporter to TV journalist, which gave rise to a whole new backdrop for various threats to the Kent/Superman masquerade. For reference about what had and hadn't happened in Superman's long history, Julie had available the services of assistant editor E. Nelson Bridwell, star Superman scholar.

Perhaps most importantly, it was around this time that Julie helped a new generation of creative talent get started at DC. The team of writer Denny O'Neil and artist Neal Adams, who shook the comics world when they brought "relevance" to their Green Lantern and Green Arrow series, certainly blossomed under Schwartz's guidance and went on to do notable work together on Batman. Roy Thomas, Jim Shooter, Len Wein, Marv Wolfman, Elliot Maggin, Cary Bates, and many others received inspiration, coaching, confidence, and much fine editing from "the Schwartz."

"Let's Go!"

The ultimate "Schwartz sighting," among the many in the SF stories drawn by Sid Greene, is "Menace of the Shrinking Bomb" in Strange Adventures #113 (Feb 1960). The whole story is woven around thinly-disguised portraits of Julie and Gardner Fox–doing what they really did. It's one of the great "comics about comics" stories. In addition to being a superb "in joke," it's a crackling good yarn with clever concepts and sustained suspense, as well as a believably inevitable resolution. Strange Adventures #113 also features an excellent Gil Kane cover that combines DC's "alien invasion" and "menace to Earth" themes into one compelling image. Pictured here are the first two pages and a panel from page three. In the first panel after the splash we even hear Julie's trademark, "Let's go!"

THEN THEY DISCOVER THESE ANSWERS ARE TRUE! YOU SEE, THE MARTIANS ACTUALLY WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR--
WHOA! YOU'RE WAY OFF BASE! LET ME TELL YOU WHAT I WANT, GREG! HUMAN INTEREST STORIES WITH REALISTIC PROBLEMS! A DIFFERENT MENACE!



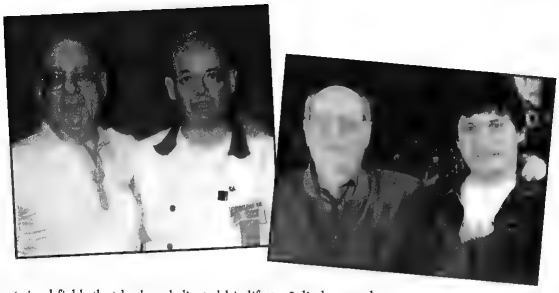
Chapter Five: Ambassador of Wonder

Indeed, his latter years of editing the Man of Steel, were laced by the growing awareness in the comics and SF communities of just how valuable and vast the continuing contribution of Julius Schwartz is to these dual fronts of fantastic literature. Several comics issues featured the living legend as part of the story, including the famous *Superman* #411 in 1985 for Julie's 70th birthday–which recounts a slightly-fictionalized four-color life of Schwartz. In 1986, after sixteen years of supervising Superman, Julie decided his turn with the character was done.

His next project for DC was an "ahead of their time" series of graphic novel adaptations of outstanding science fiction stories. These were done using the best authors, the best artists, and the best editor (Julie), but in terms of sales the series was not successful because this was before quality graphic novels had made any penetration into the "mass market" bookstores that make SF one of their staple offerings.

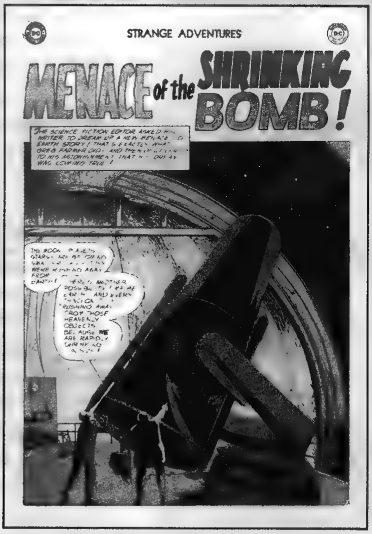
When Julie finally traded his role of editor for that of ambassador, under the auspices of DC, he began–at the various comic and SF conventions–to relate an oral history of the two intertwined fields that he has dedicated his life to. Julie has made the story of SF and comics into a tale as entertaining as any ever "batted out" by his vast stable of writers. He also worked out an arrangement with DC where he comes into the office once a week as a consultant, to chat with the editorial department and "hang out." Julie gets billed as the only living legend in both the comics and SF fields, and no one could deserve more, or handle better, such a mantle. ■

(Author's note: Working with Julie for the last few months, and immersing myself in his "wonder-filled" career, has been a transforming experience for my own writing and editing. Nothing could have inspired me more than reading, hearing, and thinking about Julie working with those writers I enjoyed so much while devouring SF and comics as a youth. Thanks for all the wonder, Julie; we needed it and always will!)



Julius Schwartz and Denny O'Neil (LEFT PHOTO) at Archcon in 1992.

Julius Schwartz and Elliot S. Maggin (RIGHT PHOTO) in Los Angeles in 1991.



Voice of Wonder!

JULIE SCHWARTZ

PART II

[Continued from last issue]

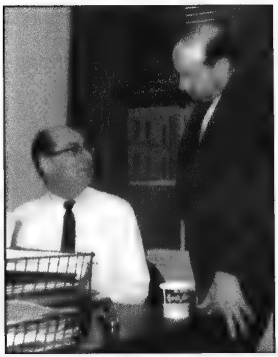
In issue #50 *CBM* presented comics fans with an account of Julie's contributions to science fiction, the Golden Age of comics, and the development of SF comics during the early 1950s. To complement our coverage of Schwartz's creation and nurturing of the Silver Age in this issue, the following interview is presented to let the "voice of wonder" tell, in his own words, some of the details of the era.

Tell us about *Showcase*...

The first editor of *Showcase* was Jack Schiff, on an issue called Fire Fighters. The second one, which Kanigher worked on, was called Kings of the Wild. The third one, Kanigher self-edited, called Frogmen. The fourth I did, introducing the new Flash. The fifth (Manhunters), sixth, and seventh (Challengers) I had nothing to do with. I did the eighth, and then the thirteenth, and fourteenth–all featuring Flash. When they decided to put out *The Flash* magazine, I got it ready and said we need an issue number, what shall we call it? They said, the answer's obvious, it's going to be #105. When a kid goes to the comic book rack filled with hundreds of magazines, and sees two magazines side by side, one an issue #1 the other #105, which are they going to spend their hard-earned dime on—a magazine they know is good because it's already run for 104 issues or an untested #1? That always gets a laugh from comic book folks. When Green Lantern and Justice League came out, they didn't have numbers on the covers of the first issues.

How did those early Silver Age comics differ from those published today?

In those days we always had a lot of fillers. In addition to gags and text stories (a requirement of 2nd-class mail) we had illustrated features to interest the reader. For example, in *Mystery In Space* I did "Giants of the Telescope" and "Mysteries in Space." In Flash I did "Flash Facts." I wrote all those filler pages and was paid $11 each for them–added income I could really use. I



JULIE SCHWARTZ AND SID GREENE HOLD AN ART CONFERENCE IN THE DC OFFICES.

loved doing them, and from time to time at a convention someone fortyish would come over to me and thank me for those filler pages–they helped them pass their science courses in high school. Even when I did a science fiction story in *Mystery In Space* or *Strange Adventures* I'd often have footnotes explaining the scientific basis of a story.

Your SF mags are also remembered for their intriguing covers...

I quickly realized that with both *Strange Adventures* and *Mystery In Space* it was better to do the cover beforehand and get a story written around it, because all too often, looking through the artwork of the three or four stories scheduled for the book, there was plenty of action but no dramatic or emotional hook. So Carmine would come in for a "cover conference," or Gil Kane or Murphy Anderson. Those were the three top cover creators. Some days we'd pace up and down and come up with nothing, other days we'd knock out three or four in a row. As soon as I got a cover sketch, I'd pass it over to Gardner Fox or John Broome and we'd plot a story around the cover, using that image as the narrative hook.

One of the "unsung hero" SF artists in the early Silver Age was Sid Greene.

I don't know how I happened to give him work or where he came from; Sid was primarily an inker. But every once in a while he would pencil and ink a story. Sometimes he'd work in the office, although he lived up near Port Jervis, New York, a couple of hours away. I remember my wife and I would drive up to Sid's place for a weekend and a barbecue. There were times when he'd lay out a job in the production room. When he roughed out his stories, he would draw everyone in the nude, and one day DC President Harry Donenfeld came around showing some VIP the artists at work and they took one look at Sid Greene's work–that was the last time Sid Greene drew people in the nude. Of course when he inked it, he drew the clothes. Also, anytime Sid Greene penciled a story I (or my likeness) would probably appear in it as a character.

When Space Ranger and Adam Strange started their trial runs in *Showcase*, had you already planned that if they were successful they would move to *Unexpected* and *Mystery In Space*, rather than their own titles?

Absolutely not. Editorial director Whit Ellsworth said he wanted to put out two new science fiction magazines featuring continuing heroes, a present-day hero and a future hero. Since Jack Schiff pre-dated me at DC, he was given first choice. Fortunately for me, he chose Space Ranger, the future

hero. I preferred a current character because I figured a young reader would identify with someone from our world who could marvel at anything fantastic, whereas future people would regard their super-science as commonplace.

Gardner Fox and I plotted the Adam Strange concepts. We came up with a planet in some (relatively) nearby solar system that had been trying to contact Earth for centuries via "zeta beams." When the beams reached Earth they somehow had the power to transport whatever they struck back to their home planet. Adam Strange found himself in the path of a zeta beam and thence teleported between worlds. He became a hero to the Rann people, defending his "adopted" planet against alien attacks. And Adam would stay on Rann till the beam's effects wore off–usually right before a big kiss with his girl-friend, Alanna. While on Rann he got a schedule of when and where the beams (fired hundreds of years ago) were going to strike Earth, and the stories would start with Adam maneuvering to intercept the beam.

And it's after the JLA starts that you began printing complete addresses in the letter columns?

It was during Hawkman's second *Brave and Bold* tryout that comics fandom got jump-started. It was exactly like Hugo Gernsback's printing full addresses back in the late 1920's *Amazing Stories*, which triggered SF fandom. I liked the idea of Hawkman being a policeman from another planet. We worked hard on those hero revivals. I tried especially hard to match the "right" artist with the strip, and, that–for Hawkman–meant Joe Kubert, who'd drawn the Golden Age version.

I always thought Gil Kane and Green Lantern were a good combination–smooth and sleek.

Right! Having the costume without a cape made for graceful flying poses. Gil was, and still is, very creative.

Continued on page 62

CELEBRATION OF WONDER

Continued from page 33

didn't know what an editor was. But, what I did know was that certain comic books "read" better than others, they somehow managed to deliver more of the things I read comics for. Justice League, Flash, Green Lantern, Mystery In Space, Atom, and Hawkman had something going for them that the other DC's...Superman, Batman, Jimmy Olsen, Aquaman, Superboy, World's Finest, Wonder Woman, etc.–just didn't. It took me a while to figure out what it was that made the real difference–the editor, the guy who puts together the creative team and gives a title its drive and direction. In the case of all my childhood favorites, I learned that they were all the work of one particular editor...Julius Schwartz.

If I had to single out one person whose work most influenced me to go into comics professionally, I'd have to name Mr. Schwartz. About twenty years after I first read one of his books, I did enter the field and joined the editorial staff of "the competition" (I did give DC first crack at me, but Marvel called me back first). And since that time, my goal has always been to make my books as good as the ones I read as a kid. In other words, to try to be as good an editor as Julius Schwartz. Never having worked for or with the man, I have no first-hand knowledge of how he wrought the editorial wonders he did. I've had to wing it. Still, if the only thing I'm remembered as is "an editor in the Schwartzian tradition," you won't hear me complaining.

In the fifty year history of the comic book medium, there have been many great writers and artists, but only one great editor... Julius Schwartz.

3 From that same 500-copy booklet (and deserving wider circulation) comes **Marv Wolfman**'s charming tribute: We're all here to honor Julie Schwartz, and we all know why. How many of us toiling daily behind computers or art tables haven't heard that without Julie we would probably be writing obituaries for local newspapers or doing paste-ups for ad agencies? In one way or another everybody who's broken into comics after 1960 owes his or her livelihood to Julie.

The legend is well-known. Julie revived Flash and made a hit of that. Julie was responsible for Atomic Knights, Adam Strange, Space Museum, Elongated Man, and others. Julie... revived Green Lantern, Hawkman, Atom, and... (started)... the Justice League... Martin Goodman, publisher of Atlas/Timely/Marvel Comics heard about the sales figures on JLA and told his editor-in-chief Stan Lee to copy the formula, and so the Fantastic Four was born. In effect, Marvel Comics and its vast, far-reaching empire owes its fortune to Julie's fantastic editorial skill.

We've heard this story all our professional lives. Most of the time from Julie himself.

We've heard other stories from Julie as well. Julie discovered Ray Bradbury. Julie was heading up an expedition to discover a new route from Spain to India when he found Ray floating in seas of rejection. Julie planted his editorial blue pencil on Ray and promptly turned him into a millionaire writer, a man so rich he seemingly has only one suit to his name.

Julie met and taught all the great stars: Bester, Asimov, Howard, Lovecraft, Wells, Poe, Verne, Copernicus, Galileo, and Adam.

...We've heard Julie talk on for hours about how little he has to say. We've seen him explain to crowds of thousands how shy he is. And we've known him to explain why anti-matter can't possibly exist in a comic that also features people who fly, bend steel in their bare hands, and have X-ray vision.

And yet we're still here. Why? Well, the food is free. We had nothing better to do. And, hell, we really loved those comics, didn't we?

Thanks, Julie ■

SCHWARTZ INTERVIEW

Continued from page 63

For the Atomic Knights you chose John Broome as writer, although Gardner Fox did lend his name to the main character.

Gardner Grayle. One of the fun things about the Knights was that each story would take place in a different post-holocaust city. We had "Danger in Detroit," "The Cavemen of New York," "The Lost City of Los Angeles," and my favorite–the Dixieland jazz inspired "The King of New Orleans." For some reason there was only one Atomic Knights cover, and that was for one of the least successful stories.

Can we talk a little about John Broome? He was an important writer for DC but hasn't gotten nearly the attention he deserves.

John was one of my best friends. I think David Vern (who as David Reed had written for Mort and Jack), recommended him to me when Hank Kuttner stopped writing Green Lantern in the mid-1940s. John won the job, did it well, and stayed with DC... scripting many of the Silver Age classics of the late 1950s and early '60s.

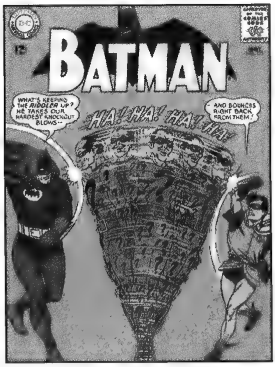
About the "new look" Batman. I must admit that I was a fan of Schiff's 'SF' Batman, from 1958 through 1960. I thought that he kept true to the character's detective roots. He'd gather clues and predict the villain's moves at the end, enabling him to catch up with and thwart them. But that did start to break down in 1961 or so.

Well, when I was handed the editorial reins on Batman in 1964 it did seem that the detective aspects were being neglected. I took it back from SF to crime, reinstating Batman as the "world's greatest detective." And I brought the villains back. The Riddler, the Penguin, Catwoman, and the Joker: it was those stories that impressed Bill Dozier, the 20th Century Fox producer who started the Batman TV show.

On the first Batman story you edited, you had Carmine Infantino do the art.

Carmine was my prime artist. He was very reliable and never missed a deadline. He would often work in the office or the bullpen, and he would always do two pages a day. And when he came back the next day, he looked over those pages–if he was satisfied with them he would continue on. If not, he'd do them over and still do the regular day's two pages.

My memory is that he came up one day looking for work with a fellow artist named Frank Giacoia, who went on to become one of the top, absolute top inkers of all time. The first story I gave Carmine was for a feature we did years ago called "The Ghost Patrol," about three zany characters who were ghosts. He brought back the story which I checked over and liked, except for one panel that wasn't quite right, so I asked him to re-do it. Carmine took that page and went into the corner of the room; I could tell he was upset with himself that he didn't do a 100% job. Of course he redrew the panel.



EVEN THE VILLAINS OF THE GOLDEN AGE WERE BROUGHT BACK IN SCHWARTZ'S SILVER AGE. ON **BATMAN** #171 (MAY 1965), E. NIGMA, THE RIDDLER, DONS THE BIG QUESTION MARK TO WAGE A BAFFLING BATTLE AGAINST THE DYNAMIC DUO.

One of the first things you did was add the yellow oval around the Bat insignia on his chest.

Right, the contrast really made that Bat symbol stand out. And we made his face a little more realistic.

Also in Detective, you traded in the Martian Manhunter for the Elongated Man...

I thought the Elongated Man was more of a detective, and–hence–fit better with the theme of the book. The Elongated Man stories always had a wild narrative hook, but no matter how fantastic it was, he would always solve that crime that lay behind it.

Did you run any other back-up features during your tenure on Detective?

I had a short series that I loved doing–"The Mystery Analysts of Gotham City." A group of detectives would get together and solve crimes without leaving the room. Those were hard to plot.

When Marvel started encroaching on DC's dominance of the Silver Age, did you read any of their books to see what they were doing?

Well, I looked at some sure; I wouldn't really say I 'read' them. I actually think I stayed away from them on purpose to avoid any tendency to copycat. Remember, my name at the time was "B.O." Schwartz, which stood for Be Original.

Well, let's move on to your stewardship of the Man of Steel.

When I took over Superman after Mort's leaving to pursue his writing in 1970, the first thing I did was to get rid of Kryptonite, and, also the robot duplicates that Superman had been using to protect his secret identity. And I toned his strength down a bit. Instead of being able to hold up the world on a finger, now he'd have to use both hands.

Do you know anything about the end of Jerry Siegel's career at DC?

Jerry never wrote for me. It was always for Mort or Jack. I did ask him to contribute to the 45th anniversary issue of *Action*. He wrote a long letter–addressed to Superman–detailing how he created him. I also asked Joe Shuster for a Superman drawing; he was legally blind by then. But he did do a wonderful flying Superman which he said would be the last one he would ever draw.

After many years of editing Superman, you finally stopped. Why?

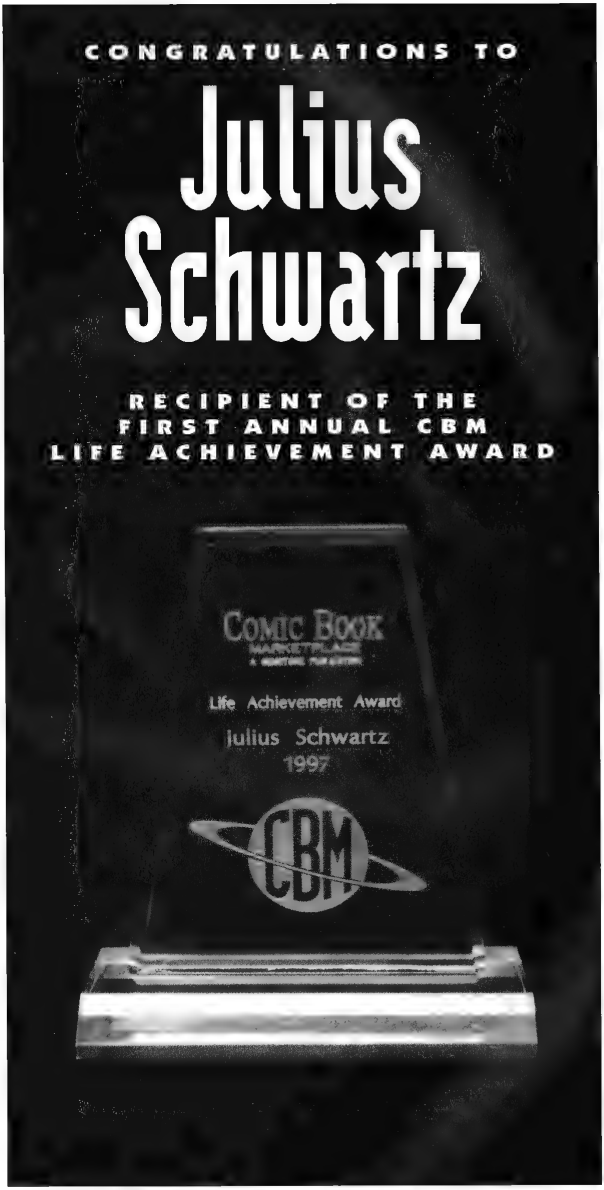
Well, I'd been editing Superman for 16 years, and it just seemed enough. I'd edited over 600 Superman stories, and I had done everything with the character that I could think of. I wanted to end my Superman editing with a bang, by pretending that the mag would be discontinued. And I wanted the story to wrap up all the loose ends. Of course I thought Jerry Siegel should write it. So I asked him, and he said, 'Great.' But when I told him he'd have to sign a work for hire contract, he said, 'No way. No more contracts.' The next morning I was having breakfast with Alan Moore and told him about the idea. He reached across the table, put his hands around my neck and said, 'If you don't let me write it, I'll kill you!' Well, I couldn't be accessory to my own murder, so I let him write it.

After you stopped editing Superman you edited some SF graphic novels for DC?

Yes. I can't remember if the project was my idea or suggested to me, but it sure sounded super. Here's the seven I edited, in random order: Hell on Earth by Robert Bloch; Nightwings by Robert Silverberg; Frost and Fire by Ray Bradbury; The Merchants of Venus by Frederick Pohl; The Magic Goes Away by Larry Niven; Sandkings by George R.R. Martin; and Demon With a Glass Hand by Harlan Ellison.

They didn't sell well–the Ellison sold best. But they weren't marketed in bookstores in the SF section, as I'd hoped they would be. I think that would have helped. But the project was canceled, and that was the end of my editorial work. I became a "consultant" for DC and a "good will" ambassador for them at conventions. I'd go to the office once a week and visit with the editors. And I like the conventions–it's nice to know that one's work has not been forgotten. ■

To be continued... Don't miss next month's CBM featuring "Testament of Wonder," the conclusion of the Julie Schwartz trilogy!



Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the discovery of the Edgar Church Collection!

The GOLD Standard

By nationally known Mile High collector, Dr. Patrick M. Kochanek

During the early days of *Comic Book Marketplace*, I had the honor and great fun of composing an original series of articles on the Edgar Church "Mile High" collection (see *CBM* #2-5). For issue #51 commemorating the 20th anniversary of the discovery of the "Edgar Church/Mile High" collection, Ye Editor asked me to comment on these books, now over five years since those initial articles.

All that needs to be said are the words "gold standard." And that is the bottom line. The Mile High collection is the gold standard to which all other high grade Golden Age books are compared. Hell, for that matter, even high grade Silver Age books are often listed as "Mile High quality." The Mile High collection changed the standard of grading for comics in general. Frequently, they represent the only truly mint copy of a given Golden Age book. On the 20th anniversary of the discovery of this magnificent collection, little more needs to be said.

Quite a few times I have had people approach me and state that their copy of a given book is equal to or in even better condition than the Mile High. Often times it is just not the case. However, when it is, I think to myself, "That book may indeed be better than the Mile High, but what about the other 20,000 plus books in the collection?" When one thinks about the fact that the vast majority of these books represents the best if not one of the two or three best copies in existence, it is unbelievable. The combination of remarkable completeness, exquisite condition and the incredible duration of time in the Golden Age of comics during which these books were accumulated (around 20 years) makes this collection unique. Additionally, consider the fact that even the individual companies that printed theses books do not have copies of their own product equal in condition to the copies in the Mile High collection! After two decades it seems clear that the extensive and high quality accumulation will never be equaled. In fact, nothing will even come close.

The value of these books has made it difficult for anyone to collect them–particularly if one tries to assemble a consecutive run of any importance. Some of the offers I have received for books have actually made it impossible to keep individual books. Nevertheless, I am very pleased to own what I have from the Mile High collection. One look at the Mile High copies of *More Fun* 61 or 65, *All Star* 22, *Adventure* 46, 70 or 72, or the *Flash* 104 is mind boggling. Once again, thank you Edgar Church.

Spa Fon, with white pages once more! ■

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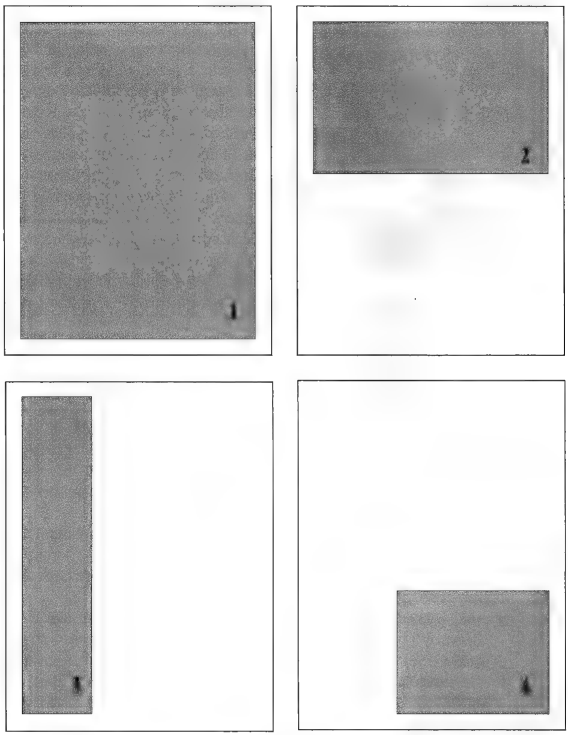

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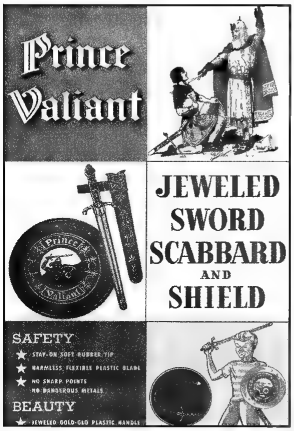
Continued from page 36

Valiant and Aleta paper doll book by Saalfield of which I have only seen one copy after many years of searching. This 10" by 14" book from 1954 features exquisite cardboard cutouts of Prince Valiant and Aleta.



Back cover comic book ad for the Prince Valiant jeweled sword and shield (Mattel)

There are also the tin sword and shield and its stunning box with a full picture of Valiant and his war horse on the back just waiting for someone to get scissor happy and ruin a perfectly cool box. If you didn't like the sword and shield, why not buy the Prince Valiant Crossbow Pistol Set or the Prince Valiant Archery Set for that neighborhood battle with the Saxons and Picts? These weapons seem to be the most difficult to find from this early 1950s material.

Hastings House published a brilliantly produced set of seven volumes of the Prince Valiant story. Each book is a cornucopia of written text with illustrations taken from the Sunday strips and great dust jackets. The copyright date on these books is 1952 and, although not rare, complete sets are becoming harder and harder to find. These have also been reissued by Nostalgic Press, so beware of lesser value later printings.

Then in the mid-'50s, Dell *Four Color* published seven issues of *Prince Valiant* comics at various times between 1954 and 1958. These were not drawn by Hal Foster, but by Bob Fujitani (pseudonym Fuje) who did admirable work. The covers were especially dynamic.

The marketing of Prince Valiant merchandise seemed to hit a slow spell during the '60s and '70s. There was a record, a small treasure book of his quest to be a knight, and a poster celebrating Foster's last strip before John Cullen Murphy took over as the artist in residence in the early 1970s.

Now, as countless others and I celebrate the 60th anniversary of Prince Valiant and raise our glasses in a toast to the memory of Hal Foster, there seems to be renewed interest as yet another movie is set for release sometime in the near future. May it bring with it another slew of interesting Valiant toys and memorabilia. I'm anxiously waiting.... ■

Mark Magarity is a nationally known collector of Prince Valiant items, Victorian games (previous to 1900), and Toy Mechanical Tanks and Monkeys (Marx windups). In real life Mark teaches English at Fresno High School in Fresno, California, and lives with his wife, Brenda, and his son, Paul.

CBM Checklist: ***Prince Valiant Memorabilia***

COMIC BOOKS

- ☐ Feature Book #26 (David McKay, 1941, GD $150, FN $450, VF $750)

Four Color Comics
(Dell, 7 issues, 1954-1958, GD $20, FN $40, NM $60 each)

- ☐ #567 (1954, Movie issue with Robert Wagner photo cover)
- ☐ #650 (1955, "Hostage to Treachery")
- ☐ #699 (1956, "The Secret of the Flames")
- ☐ #719 (1956, "The Peril of the Round Table")
- ☐ #788 (1957, "Trial by Arms")
- ☐ #849 (1957, "Quest for the Grail")
- ☐ #900 (1958, "The Island of Thunder")

BOOKS

- ☐ A Young Knight's Tale (Book, Martin, 1945, $100-150, scarce)
- ☐ Paper Doll Book (Saalfield, 1954, $250-400, rare)
- ☐ Coloring Book (Saalfield, 1954, $100-150, scarce)
- ☐ Treasure Book (1954, $25-40)

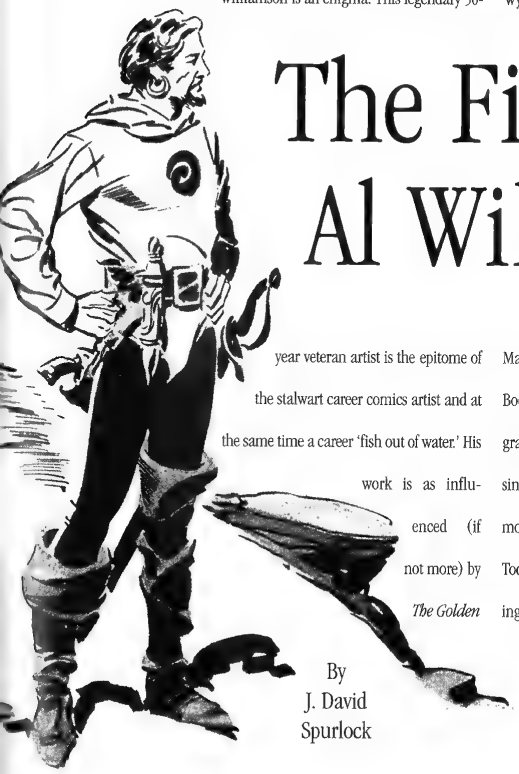
Hastings House Books
(7 Volumes, 1950s, $20-60 per volume with dust jacket, without dust jacket 25% of above)

- ☐ Vol. 1- In the Days of King Arthur
- ☐ Vol. 2- Fights Attila the Hun
- ☐ Vol. 3- On the Inland Sea
- ☐ Vol. 4- Perilous Voyage
- ☐ Vol. 5- The Golden Princess
- ☐ Vol. 6- In the New World
- ☐ Vol. 7- The Three Challenges

OTHER MEMORABILIA

- ☐ Syroco Composition Statue (circa 1944, $100-300)
- ☐ Tin Dime Bank (KFS, 1954, $150-200)
- ☐ Junior Picture Puzzle (Built-Rite, 1950s, $100-150)
- ☐ Pinbacks (1950s, $25-40)
- ☐ Candy Box (Lemer Novelty Candy Co., 1950s, $150-200, rare)
- ☐ Game of Valor (Transogram, 1954, $100-150)
- ☐ Shield and Jeweled Sword (Mattel, 1954, $250-400)
- ☐ Crossbow Pistol Game (1948, $150-200)
- ☐ Archery Set (1950s, $100-150)
- ☐ Comic Character Christmas Card (1950s, $15-25)
- ☐ Prince Valiant Record (MGM, 1968, $15-25)

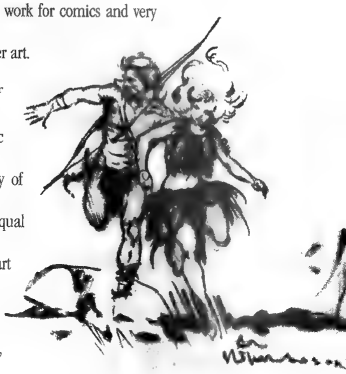
The Finer Art of Al Williamson



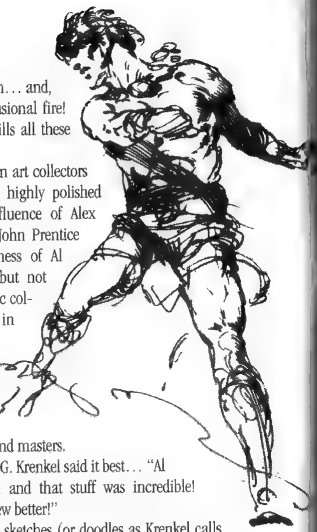
By J. David Spurlock

Williamson... just say the name around anyone who knows comics and you'll start a discussion. For example, the other day Jim Steranko and I were discussing how artists can be categorized into two groups–warm and cool. Russ Manning is cool... Joe Kubert is warm. John Buscema is warm where brother Sal is cool... Steve Rude is both, his pencils are warm but his inks are cool. Al Williamson is warm even fiery hot on occasion.

Williamson is an enigma. This legendary 50-year veteran artist is the epitome of the stalwart career comics artist and at the same time a career 'fish out of water.' His work is as influenced (if not more) by *The Golden Age of Illustration* as it is by any comics. Yet, he has never done anything but illustration work for comics and very seldom does color or cover art.



The Golden Age of Illustration is classic commercial work worthy of appreciation on a level equal to museum quality fine art and artists like N.C. Wyeth, Howard Pyle, Maxfield Parrish, Dean Cornwell, Daniel Vierge, Franklin Booth, J.C. Coll, etc., that created it. There's a dignity and grandeur to this new compilation that has seldom been seen since the 1930s. That's because Williamson's work has much more to do with the Golden Age of illustration than it does with Todd McFarlane, Jack Kirby or Carl Barks (three names covering the wide range of comic book art). ▶



While Williamson has glorified EC's *Weird Science*, won awards for his Flash Gordon, and Marvel-ous inking, inspired a generation of imitators with his *Creepy* and *Eerie* magazine work, and has been universally recognized as the truly classic *Star Wars* comics artist, his primary comic art influence is not from comic books at all.

> **"Al would doodle... and that stuff was incredible! Nobody ever drew better!"**
> **– Roy G. Krenkel**

It is the great adventure strip artists of the '30s and '40s; Milton Caniff (Terry and the Pirates), Roy Crane (Buzz Sawyer, Capt. Easy), Burne Hogarth (the famous Tarzan artist whom Williamson studied under and briefly assisted), and Hal Foster (Prince Valiant), but most of all it was Alex Raymond of Flash Gordon, Jungle Jim, Secret Agent X9 and Rip Kirby fame that inspired Williamson toward comics. These artists were influenced by the great illustrators and many (including Raymond) also worked in the illustration field.

Although respect should always be given to pioneers, it is possible to improve–even on classic concepts. N.C. Wyeth studied under Howard Pyle. To say Wyeth surpassed Pyle is no insult to Pyle, it is a compliment to Pyle. The great Frazetta took elements of Wyeth and Pyle and pushed them into wild new directions.

Williamson can't see it for humbleness and respect but I'm not alone in thinking that in some ways he's surpassed Raymond's Flash Gordon. True, Williamson's Flash wouldn't exist without Raymond's, and Raymond was more consistent (a good budget for models didn't hurt). The greatest quality that Raymond had was his ability to instill his work with a glamour not even Williamson could match. But, Williamson has something better...

All gold is good but, Spanish gold is especially fine. Williamson has a heart of finest Spanish gold. I'm not saying he's just a nice guy... I'm talking about the adventurous spirit of the conquistadors, the purity of Spanish silver and gold, a passionate romanticism, depth, flair, galleons and atmosphere, richness, warmth... and, oh yes, the occasional fire! Williamson instills all these in his work.

It is rare when art collectors see beyond the highly polished professional influence of Alex Raymond and John Prentice to the uniqueness of Al Williamson... but not so rare for comic collectors. This in spite of the fact that Al's romantic fine art embues Al's study of the grand masters.

Perhaps Roy G. Krenkel said it best... "Al would doodle... and that stuff was incredible! Nobody ever drew better!"

Williamson's sketches (or doodles as Krenkel calls them) are the closest thing the artist has produced to traditional fine art and in many ways his purest work. A spattering of these have seen print over the years in EC fanzines, convention programs and a rare and now expensive little pamphlet called the *Fine Line of Al Williamson* which was circulated to a small group of in-the-know collectors in the early 1970s.

But after all these years there's good news for Williamson fans! Seems Al is finally putting together a major collection of these scarce pieces to be published by Vanguard Productions.

We can always wonder what might have been if styles in illustration hadn't changed from the Scribner Publishing glories of the 1920s and '30s to the less adventurous fashion oriented work of the 1950s (*McCalls, Redbook, Ladies Home Journal,* etc.). But for our own sakes and comic collectors everywhere we should always be thankful for the fact Al Williamson chose to give his warmth, grandeur, fire, romantic adventurism and Spanish gold to generations of comic book and comic strip readers.

Kirby and Wood are gone. Toth, Steranko, Kubert and Eisner are semi-retired. I contend that Al Williamson is *the* grand master artist still regularly working in comics. We will never be able to repay the favors he's done for us through his art... but then again, he'll never ask us either! ■

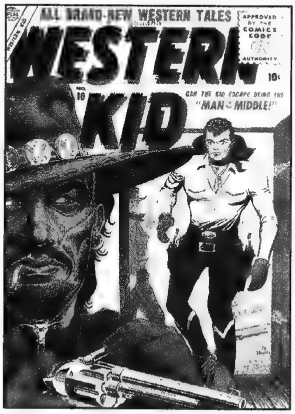
J. David Spurlock has been an illustrator for 20 years, is past president of the Dallas Society of Illustrators, and teaches comic book art at the University level. His character, Rick Montana the Space Cowboy, was created as a tribute to Al Williamson. David is currently working with Frank Miller and Mark Evanier as assistant editor on the upcoming hardback book Jack Kirby: A Celebration.

WILLIAMSON WESTERNS

Paul Garvey here.... You know the news, now here's the rest of the story.... Imagine, it's 1956 and you are a comic book fan with a passion for EC, but by then EC had all but disappeared. Oh they still published *MAD* and you might have been given a glimmer of hope if you were lucky enough to have seen the Picto-Fiction magazines, but basically it was over. What are you to do? After being accustomed to a steady diet of art from the likes of Reed Crandall, Jack Davis, and George Evans, what could compare? Then it really hits you... "Oh my gawd, no more Al Williamson!!" You begin to wander from street to street, from town to town in a blind stupor. Your fevered mind repeating one thought over and over... "No Al Williamson, no Al Williamson." You lose all track of time, blacking out for days at a time, until one day as you lay in some gutter crying out to passers by... "Al Williamson where are you?!!"

You don't even remember the men in white who took you away, laced you up in a strait jacket and locked you in a padded cell. Now as you find yourself strapped to a table waiting for the shock therapy, electrodes taped to your temples, thrashing and jerking, trying to free yourself. Suddenly you notice the orderly in the room is reading a comic, an Atlas western and inside that comic is...an Al Williamson story! "STOP" you cry, seconds before they pull the switch that will erase your pain. The doctors pronounce you a medical miracle, your sanity now restored, you are a productive member of society once more, writing a column entitled Second Time Around. And now you know the rest of the story...good day.

Thank you Paul, yes it's true, I am a bit obsessed with the art of Al Williamson, an obsession that I am sure that you either share with me or you will as soon as you see the incredible art that Al did during his stint at Atlas immediately following his celebrated tenure at EC. The following list encompasses Al's western work at Atlas that has been reprinted. So sit back, relax and try to remain calm. Remember Williamson's work is just a reprint away... and most of them list for under five bucks in NM! 'til next time, happy trails...



BY SHAWN HAMILTON

✔ Gunsmoke Western #36 (1956) "When Drago Came To Town" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Kid Colt, Outlaw #172 (1973, $2 in Guide)

✔ Kid Colt, Outlaw #59 (1956) "Inside The Cave" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Rawhide Kid #79 (Aug 1970, $14 in Guide)

✔ Kid Colt, Outlaw #60 (1956) "The Promise" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Rawhide Kid #111 (May 1973, $8 in Guide)

✔ Kid Colt, Outlaw #66 (1956) "Fear" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Kid Colt, Outlaw #147 (1970, $4 in Guide)

✔ Kid Colt, Outlaw #88 (1960) "Escape" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Kid Colt, Outlaw #170 (1973, $2 in Guide)

✔ Matt (Kid) Slade, Gunfighter #1 (1956) "When Kelly Came To Town" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Two-Gun Kid #110 (1973, $1.50 in Guide)

✔ Matt (Kid) Slade, Gunfighter #2 (1956) "The Rip Snorter" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Western Gunfighters #18, 2nd series, $4 in Guide)

✔ Matt (Kid) Slade, Gunfighter #7 (1957) "The Gunslinger" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Mighty Marvel Western #32 (1974, $1.25 in Guide); also reprinted in: The Art Of Al Williamson (1983) B&W

✔ The Outlaw Kid #8 (1955) "No Turning Back" (5 pgs); reprinted in: The Outlaw Kid #9 (1971, 2nd series, $2 in Guide)

✔ The Outlaw Kid #10 (1956) "The Protector" (4 pgs); reprinted in: The Outlaw Kid #3 (1970, 2nd series, $2 in Guide)

✔ The Outlaw Kid #18 (1957) "The Last Notch" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Rawhide Kid #95 (1972, $8 in Guide)

✔ Quick-Trigger Western #13 (1956) "Outlaw's Hideout" (5 pgs); reprinted in: Western Gunfighters #2 (1970, 2nd series, $4 in Guide)

✔ Rawhide Kid #7 (1956) "The Coward" (4 pgs); reprinted in: The Western Kid #3 (1972, 2nd series, $3.50 in Guide)

✔ The Ringo Kid Western #10 (1956) "Stranger in Town" (4 pgs); reprinted in: The Ringo Kid #1 (1970, 2nd series, $4 in Guide)

✔ The Ringo Kid Western #13 (1956) "Where Larrabee Rode" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Rawhide Kid #86 (1971, $16 in Guide)

✔ Two-Gun Kid #25 (1955) "The Hunted" (5 pgs); reprinted in: The Art Of Al Williamson (1983) B &W

✔ Western Kid #9 (1956) "A Stranger in Tombstone" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Tex Dawson, Gunslinger #1 (Jan 1973, $1.50 in Guide)

✔ Western Kid #10 (1956) "Genius With A Gun" (4 pgs); reprinted in: Wyatt Earp #30 (Oct 1972, $2 in Guide)

There ya go pardners, a rip snorting reprint guide to the wild and woolly world of Williamson westerns, rustle yourself up a few if'n you know what's good fer ya! ■

References: This index was based almost entirely on the research work of Jim Vadeboncoeur and the book The Art Of Al Williamson *(1983) by James Van Hise (Blue Dolphin Press).*

Is a GD copy of Showcase #9 overpriced!

So how did you do? Did you find everything you wanted? Did you find a deal, or did you really have to "step up"? So far, the word from collectors is that the dealers that treated them with a bit of respect and provided discounts, were the one that received their business. The shift to more of a buyer's market allows most collectors to do this, and some dealers have benefited greatly from this... others not. There was a continuation of "overkill" on certain books at this season's conventions, while others came up empty handed, again. A revisitation of an older dynamic was reintroduced with Suspense #3, and that is pricing based upon scarcity. This trend is becoming more and more prominent as collectors and dealers are educating themselves as to what is actually "scarce" vs "key". Guide pricing is only used as a basis for a multiple, and we go up from there!

Pre Golden Age/Golden Age (1933-45)

Not all Gold is hot, much of it never really was in the past three years. Funny how this same situation played out in 1994 with Silver. Some dealers reported that Gold is really down for them or slow moving. When I inquire about inventory, I hear titles from Fawcett, Target, Shadow, Leading, low grade Fiction House, ect... books that really never moved even at the peak of the market in 1995. Nice Gold is still selling well, albeit with discounts here and there, yet it is still in demand, and the great books are always changing hands.

Sales: Action #15 GD/VG $790; Adventure #42 GD+ $725; Batman #4 GD $500; Children's Big Book of Comics nn VF/NM $140; Double Comics 1940, FN $980; Flash Comics #2 appFN/VF $1,800; Hit Comics #3 FR $85; Human Torch #37 NM $980; Jumbo #2 GD $575; Samson #6 VF/NM $345; Thrilling #1 GD $350; Young Allies #3 VG $410.

Post Golden Age/Pre Silver Age (1946-56)

Was it there this summer? Did you see it at the conventions? Most reports say no. Pre-Code Horror, Fox Romance, Obscure One-Shots, and S.O.T.I. books are on just about everyone's want list. When demand for Gold shot up, dealers produced most of those books from existing inventory. But what about these post Gold titles? Either collectors are just not selling them up to dealers, or many of these books are just a lot more scarce than was previously believed. Demand is soaring and competition is fierce. Trading in this material accounted for a goodly percentage of the pre-conventions action.

Sales: Exciting Comics #62 VF+ $250; Fighting Yank #1 GD $325; Giant Comics Edition #13 FN $185; Jungle Comics #124 NM $125; Lars 0 Mars #10 FN $210; Lover's Lane #1 VF/NM $135; March of Comics #41 GD+ $275; My Great Love #1 VF $140; Mystery in Space #1 FN $1,100; Oscar Comics #8 NM $115; Phantom Lady #17 appVG $1,450; Startling Comics #49 FN/FN- $610; Tales of Horror #2 VG $98; Western Bandit Thrills #2 VF $145.

Silver Age (1956-69)

As many predicted, collectors are showing more and more interest in Silver, for reading and collecting. Priced correctly at market levels, dealers are selling Silver from GD to FN, and buyers are responding. Investors continue to look for the ultra high grade copies, and are even paying some impressive prices. But, price levels for anything below VF is woefully in need of rethinking. Case in point... Showcase #9 in GD for $533? With all due respect to Showcase completists, this IS Lois Lane,

Continued on page 74

GREG WHITE
17 W MONUMENT AVENUE
KISSIMMEE, FLORIDA 34741
(407) 870-0400

Hello and welcome to Central Florida. We have just returned from Sotheby's Comic Book and Art Auction. Our findings are interesting. The hobby seems very healthy. Much money was spent on all areas. Silver Age comic book lots went especially high. Those of us in the audience were constantly amazed at the telephone bids that would blow away the estimated selling price. Time and again lots of comics would bring well above what was expected. Of course the collectors bidding over the telephone did not have the benefit of seeing and grading the books in person. Golden Age lots sold well but not at the surprising level of the Silver Age. Original artwork sold at a reasonable level with a few exceptions. WE expected the two DC Golden Age covers to go high but everyone was shocked when the original cover art to a 1960's Detective comic brought three times the estimate. All in all, prices realized were at or above retail. It was not a bountiful auction if one was seeking to pick up books for resale. A good time was had by all. Sotheby's has done a fine job of establishing this as a meaningful annual event.

Silver Age

Sales remain steady on high grade DC and Marvel. The trick is keeping these books in stock. Books that pre-date 1965 are especially strong. Unfortunately, comics that fall in the below VF condition range are slow and in many cases need to be discontinued. Too many of the better books have reached price

Continued on page 74

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SCHIFFMAN CONT.

this IS a GD book, and this IS a book that can be found, as evidenced by the many mid and low grade copies for sale at San Diego.

Sales: Adventure #300 NM- $370; Amazing Spider-Man #15 VF/NM $500; Beverly Hillbillies #1 VF $98; Brave & Bold #1 GD $320; Daredevil #50 NM $38; Fantastic Four #48 GD $100; GI Combat #68 FN $55; Green Lantern #1 GD $250; Hawkman #4 NM $155; Mystery In Space #53 GD $210; Our Army at War #83 FR $135; Richie Rich #1 VG $285; Ringo Kid #21 NM $75; Silver Surfer #1 GD $78; Star Trek #1 GD $75.

Bronze Age (1970-79)

Early '70s books are the Rodney Dangerfield of comics. Love or hate him (them), he (they) did help us enjoy ourselves now and again. The lack of respect for the new levels in pricing was evidenced by the sheer lack of material at the conventions, but can you blame the dealers? Do you take the chance that the information this market flunky provides is right, and a book with a given Guide value of $1 can easily sell for $30 or more? Or do you discount a mid grade Silver book and be relatively sure of the sale? Hauling inventory from the East coast and the mid-West all the way to San Diego is not an inexpensive proposition... yet many early high-grade Bronze books just keep on selling at way over Guide.

Sales: Adventure #425 NM $22; All Star Western #10 VF+ $120; Chilli #1 VF $85; Daredevil #168 NM $35; Giant Size X-Men #1 GD $84; Homer the Happy Ghost #1 FN $115; House of Secrets #92 GD $58; Johnny Thunder #1 NM $18; Marvel Spotlight #2 FN $28; Marvel Two in One #1 NM $42; Richie Rich Funnies #1 VF/NM $50; Sgt. Rock #302 NM $30; Star Wars #107 NM $82; Superfriends #1 VF/NM $28; Unknown Soldier #205 NM $18.

As a really broad generalization, the market is in a bit of a quandary right now. We all know the slow areas, but the real questions is, "what happens when a vast majority of the market wants books are just not available?" Of course, this is what drives collecting and makes it exciting, but what if these books are just not out there to be had? As Bob Overstreet and the other pioneers of our hobby began to collect, they rounded up the best grades of the classic Golden Age they could find. They also picked up newsstand copies of the key Silver Books. But, when collecting finally got around to the post-Gold and early '70s books, these titles had languished for far too long in the bargain bins to remain high grade copies. High demand, low supply.....this is the issues that many are discussing and debating!

Now for 10 more books that presently Guide for less than the current market value:

- #1 Star Spangled War Stories #151 Guides for $85, sells for $100-150
- #2 Seven Seas #6 Guides for $410 $900-$2,400
- #3 The Saint #4 Guides for $195, sells for $250-450
- #4 Ghosts #1 Guides for $25, sells for $45-$95
- #4 Eerie #1 (Avon) Guides for $1,800, sells for $2,000-2,400
- #5 Harvey #1 Guides for $8, sells for $35-75
- #6 Famous Funnies #209 Guides for $525, sells for $800-1,100
- #7 Women In Love #1 Guides for $160, sells for $250-325
- #8 Batman Annual #1 Guides for $600, sells for $800-1,200
- #9 Claire Voyant #3 Guides for $360, sells for $425-500
- #10 Target #7 Guides for $3,400, sells for $3,800-4,200 ■

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 72

levels beyond most of the customers. This is not a good sign. I still feel price guide levels should be reduced.

Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #6 FN $250, Batman #121 FN $125, Fantastic Four #5 VG $450, Green Hornet #1 VG $40, Star Trek #1 VF $250.

Golden Age

Interest is strong on all grades. The beauty of about these comics is that most collectors are not insisting on super high grade books. It seems that most of the "speculation geeks" are more interested in books from the Silver Age, hence selling Golden Age is more enjoyable. DC and Timely lead the pack with Fox, Fawcett and MLJ also making a good showing. Funny animal and humor books are slow.

Sales: Batman #7 VG $750, Human Torch #3 FN $1,200, All Star #20 FN $550, Four Color #16 FR $400.

Artwork and Toys

We purchased a group of Aurora model kits recently. These have always sold well. Also a boxed Captain Action doll came in. Not as much activity in other areas as we would like to see. I have not been offered early Barbies or GI Joe dolls in a long time. We also have not seen any diecast toys or original art lately. We have bought a large collection of Disneyana that will help fill out our stock. Sales of these items are hit or miss at the store.

Sales: C. C. Beck cover recreation $200, Mickey Mouse animation drawing $50, Batman Aurora kit $200, Mickey Mouse Club record player $75.

Our summer season wraps up in San Diego. We will report next issue. I hope everyone had a great summer. When visiting the Walt Disney World area, please stop by and say hello. ■

MARKETPLACE MAIL

Continued from page 9

Adventures #1; #11 Plastic Man in the Game of Death (#1); #12 New York World's Fair Comics (1939-#1); #13 All Star Comics #2; #14 All Select Comics #1; #15 Captain Marvel Adventures #2; #16 Pep Comics #17; #17 Captain Marvel Jr. #1; #18 Master Comics #21; #19 Sub-Mariner #1; #20 New York World's Fair Comics 1940 (#2); #21 The Human Torch #2 (#1) (#1 was the issue that Alan actually printed, but the house ad incorrectly shows the cover to the true #2); #22 All Star Comics #1; #23 All Winners Comics #1; #24 Spy Smasher #1; #25 America's Greatest Comics #1; #26 Marvel Mystery Comics #4; #27 Silver Streak Comics #6; and #28 World's Finest Comics #7.

The next group of reprints, numbering from 29 through 32, were solicited for a 1/15/75 release date. Since I've never seen any of these, I'm not sure that they even exist. It is possible that they do, and there may even be later #s that I'm not aware of as well… #29 - Captain America Comics #2; #30 - Bulletman #1; #31 - Hit Comics #1; and #32 - Master Comics #22.

All volumes in this series have great color covers, with B&W interiors.

The 1974 catalogue has caused some confusion among collectors as it solicits for books that were never reprinted using series #s that were used for other reprints. For instance: Flashback #12 was originally solicited as Whiz Comics #12; #15 was supposed to be Jumbo Comics #1; #19 was supposed to be Four Favorites #1; and #20 was originally supposed to appear as Tough Kid Squad Comics #1.

Special Edition Series: #1 Whiz Comics (This is a 320 page volume that reprints all of the Captain Marvel stories from Whiz Comics issues #7 through 28. This compilation has color covers with B&W interiors.) Special Edition Series: #2 The Ray and Black Condor. (This is a 316 page volume that reprints over 30 different stories of the Ray and the Black Condor from Smash Comics and Crack Comics respectively.) This compilation has color covers with one of the interior stories being done in color as well. The balance of the interior material is in B&W.

Alan Light's DynaPubs also did several reprint projects involving newspaper strips, similar in format to the Menomonee Falls Gazette, as well as reprint volumes dedicated to a single character. Buck Rogers and Dick Tracy were singled out for their own reprint volumes in the Feature Showcase series. DynaPubs also did a poster set of the Frazetta Buck Rogers covers from Famous Funnies. Quite a volume of output for a fan publisher. Of course his greatest achievement was The Buyer's Guide for Comic Fandom which he launched in February of 1971, and which is still with us today, albeit under a different owner's guidance.

There was a much smaller set of reprints in the Flashback format done by Don Maris under the business name of Nostalgia, Inc. If I'm not mistaken, I believe that these may actually predate the Flashback series two volumes. These included: Standard Series: Whiz Comics #2 (#1); All Star Comics #3; Police Comics #1; Plastic Man #2; Silver Streak Comics #s 1 and 6; Blackhawk #9 (#1); Hit Comics #1; Wow Comics #1; Uncle Sam Quarterly #1; and Air Fighters Comics #2. The following two titles were announced by Maris, but they probably never saw print: Smash Comics #1; Crack Comics #1; The Best of Series: Captain Marvel (reprinted promo material and stories).

The following six collections were announced, but they probably never saw print. Walt Kelly; Blackhawk; Daredevil; Plastic Man; Lost World stories from Planet Comics; and Uncle Sam.

I hope that this information proves useful to some of your readers. If anyone can verify the existence of any other volumes, I'd love to read about it. Thanks for giving us such a great magazine. It's nice that we "old timers" have something new to look forward to on a monthly basis.

E. J. Petrie, New Jersey

Startling Terror Tales #11

After reading Greg Matson's letter in the Marketplace Mail of CBM #47, I felt compelled to offer my own encounter with the classic Cole cover of Startling Terror Tales #11. As an L. B. Cole collector myself, the thrill of this year's Motor City Comic Con for me was the opportunity to purchase a cover proof of this very book. Prior to the purchase of this piece, my awareness of cover proofs was non-existent. The midwestern dealer offering this framed piece identified it as a cover proof, but had no documentation to authenticate it.

After removing the one sheet cover from the frame and consulting with a few dealers, a consensus was obtained that the one page cover sheet with no printing on the back was indeed a cover proof. Further evidence to this was the quality and aged appearance of the paper. A later discussion with another collector suggested that I might have what he termed a "Silver Proof." The Overstreet Price Guide defines a Silver Proof

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as a black and white actual size print on thick glossy paper, hand painted by an artist to indicate colors to an engraver. Although my untrained eye cannot detect any signs of hand painting, I still feel that I do have some sort of cover proof framed and hanging on my wall.

Anyway, at first glance, the cover proof appears to be a hybrid of the two covers Greg M. was comparing. The cover proof has a blue background behind the "Terror Tales" logo, albeit not quite the electric blue shown in the CBM #33 photo. Additionally, the "Tales" lettering in this cover proof is also an obvious stencil-type font. To confuse matters, the overall background color is more orange on the proof rather than the red found on the comics. Also, the other colors in general are not as bright or robust as the CBM or Gerber photos. I'm unsure if this is a fading phenomenon or some experimentation of color combinations that was done during printing.

With this information, I am not claiming to add or subtract from Greg M's investigation. Given the stencil-type for the "Tales," it is unlikely that this cover proof was used for the proposed one-shot variant. Despite the color differences, my belief is that this cover proof played some role in getting the colors just right at the printing press. Regardless of what this piece is, it still portrays a delightful horror that only L. B. Cole could color up. I would invite any further clarification of the cover proof process and any information on the collectibility of cover proofs from CBM readers. And my thanks to you, dear Editor, for the wonderful publication. Every month I look forward to a trip back to yester-decade.

Gary Gamboa, Indiana

Martin Greim Writes!

Just picked up CBM #47. Enjoyed it tremendously, as I have past issues. This publication is one of the few that deals with my era of collectibles... the Golden Age. I also enjoy the Silver Age stuff too which brings me to the reason I'm writing. Owen Auer's letter in the abovementioned issue asked if The Charlton Portfolio ever had newsstand sales. The answer is no. You could only get it in comic shops and many did not bother to carry it. Shame, because those issues along with Charlton Bullseye had some great stuff in it.

The issue Owen asked about was just done in black and white, including the cover. Great stuff by Ditko. Steve really liked doing the Blue Beetle and working for Charlton in general. Charlton never went to the reduced page size and Steve really appreciated that. It gave him more space to express himself. Having done work for Charlton too, I had the option of working in either size. They were a very liberal comic company.

Somewhere, packed away in storage, I still have those Charlton Portfolio and Bullseye issues. They had great stuff by Ditko and Joe Staton, so I hung on to them all these years. I've been told by a few collectors of Ditko's stuff, that the last Blue Beetle issue printed in the portfolio is a tough one to find.

However, if Owen advertised, he might be able to find someone who's willing to part with it. I know even Steve has only two copies of it in his reference files and I was only able to find one in my area. A close friend of mine searched for nearly a year before he came up with one. It is worth the search though. Happy hunting!

Martin L. Greim, Massachusetts

Ammo clips and saliva drips

How many times have you seen the small classified ad in the paper offering $5,500 worth of new books, "mostly #1s," for $1,500? Would you like to wager if they actually sold? Would you like to guess if any dealer would even put an offer on them? No bet.

The key word in the above paragraph is "worth." A guide can give a relative position of worth, based upon scarcity, popularity, and condition. "Worth" in relation to books of similar stripe, ie. Sea Devils #1, Metamorpho #1, Metal Men #1, Sub-Mariner/Iron Man #1– adds the dimension of scale to the grandeur (or lack of) the book and/or character. But a comic is not a bond with coupons–it is not an annuity–it is not precious metal, it is only a story depicted graphically in a four color medium.

Our hobby (and its associated prices) is driven by our individual desires to obtain given comics. That's why you can't just turn them in at any comic dealer or convention and convert them to cash. If a whole slew of individuals feel the same way you do and there aren't very many of the books we want, BAM... the collectible "worth" goes up. If we all decide we don't like a given book, SPLASH... the "worth" goes down.

As a collector I "feel" a certain ways about specific comics and heroes. Perhaps in my youth it was the book a "rival" kid had, that I always wanted but could never obtain. Perhaps it was the book I cherished and lost when the family moved (or the ubiquitous over-zealous-Mom-cleaning-house scenario). We've all seen individuals who only want something because someone else has it or wants it. But the bottom line is still the same, "worth" is derived.

With a perceived value of worth as nebulous and subjective as this, could the actual measure of condition and value be any less convoluted? Let's take the "grades" in use to describe comics: Fair, Good, Very Good, Fine, Very Fine, Near Mint (or, should I say "Print"?). Each separate grade comes with conditions and parameters. Then come the "half"-grades: FR/GD, GD/VG, VG/FN, FN/VF, VF/NM, again, with reasons and settings to justify their use. And lastly, (my own interpretation), the "1/4" grades: "+ and -." Fair-, Fair, Fair+, Fair/GD, GD-, GD, etc. Roughly two dozen (23) grades to subjectively apply our perceptions of the physical condition of a book. Confused? And does the physical condition necessarily equate with the actual monetary value (price) of the book? No, it doesn't. Startling #49 Guides for (hypothetically) $275 in FN, but a FN copy sells for $950 in the market. Worth?—Condition? In this case scarcity and popularity play in as well.

So it would seem "pricing" sometimes does and doesn't follow any of the above conditions. There are some dealers who do not even equate grade and price together. The grade may be one thing but the price may be totally based on elements other than condition. The Guide only gives a relative position to the comic roughly based on the majority of desire-driven transactions within various subjective grading criteria. Additional "worth" can be assumed if scarcity and popularity are rolled in. Would a Superman #1 be worth anything if no one cared about him or cared less for his character, mythos, or uniform? The answer is probably no.

To some, the past track record and relative position of a given comic are all that matter when purchasing. Their speculation and risk-taking are dependent upon how the market goes, not why. It is this mindset that cultivates a "commodity" mentality, that can be used to move goods to other speculators. If those are the only motivations which motivate you, I feel bad for you.

Speaking for myself, the relative value of, and "worth" of books, came from how I loved them growing up. The Sea Devils were cooler than Metamorpho, Iron Man was cooler than Thor, Flash better than Green Lantern, etc. My mind focused on the people in the suits that good and consistent artwork created. I like them, I learned from them, I could identify with them and worship them as "heroes." They were still heroes, then, not vigilantes or berserk clods full of rage.

The stories flowed and actually took you somewhere. One picture sequence leading to another and another until the final denouement climax crescendo! Story telling with pictures—what a concept!—not poster books with genetically malformed steroid zombies....

The feelings I had (and have) for the books of my youth are still strong within me. The personal relationships which grow between the writers, artists, and the reader are as personally subjective as the grading and pricing of the same. That there are so many collectors my age who feel the same way I do... and that is where I believe the heart and soul of the books and their "worth" reside.

We all want to recapture those positive youthful feelings, and re-reading the books can transport us there. The increase in the comic's value because so many of us demand certain books doesn't bother me. It is a concrete and tangible validation of how good the Silver Age books were/are, speculation notwithstanding. It was a small step for me to generate a mythos for the Golden Age characters and books which preceded the Silver. I can embrace their Golden Age ancestors while appreciating the current incarnations that much more. Lots of my peers feel the same way, and "feeling" is what these books generate and why they are wanted.

My heart goes out to the new material collector. In an age when color TV, videos, action figures and the Internet all vie for their attention, the "sound-bite" comics of today pitifully fiddler-crab their claws for purchase and notice. The competition is fierce for those dollars, and I feel the comics of today no longer give readers as much reason to love them or to identify with them. Garish art and shoddy character development is no substitute for tight, well-paced stories. Kids don't seem to embrace their books the same way... and seem to be more spectator than participant, as we were with our heroes daily lives and challenges. There's a big difference between today's kid "counting ammo clips and saliva drips" and my childhood wonder as to why the Fly's "buzz-gun" didn't work again and again.

I hope the new comic artists and writers can come to terms with the realities of our techno-age (techno-carnage?). But I also feel they should not "write

(continued on page 79)

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down" to the new readers. They should "write up" to them, challenge them with vocabulary and wit, and most of all tell a real story in their books. Engage their readers with heroes of substance and thought... not flash and gimmicks. Give their characters soul, purpose, and consistency, and I think kids would flock back to the stands.

Stephen Gentner, Oregon

Pictopanelmaniac

As usual, the latest issue of CBM was a collector's dream. I continue to be amazed at the quality of each issue. Even those articles dealing with topics in which I do not have an abiding interest, such as premiums, somehow manage to engage me. They are written with just the right balance of scholarly respect and fannish enthusiasm, giving them a certain reader friendliness that is often lacking in other magazines. Devoting an issue to the great Wally Wood was most appreciated. I was delighted to realize how many of those "oddball" Wood comics from the '60s I possess. The photos of Wally were fascinating, and having several individual authors each give a perspective on his work gave the issue a sense of balance and diversity.

One of the most unfortunate aspects of a decline in back issue interest, and the economic challenges faced by those comic shops attempting to stock those treasures from the past, is that far too many of today's readers and casual collectors have little or no exposure to the past.

Artistic greats like Jesse Marsh, Bob Powell, and Wally Wood are quickly becoming relics of a distant past. It is up to those of us who truly love comics to see that their contributions are not forgotten, and I applaud CBM's efforts in keeping their legacy alive.

Finally, I really got a kick out of your editorial. I've decided that, given the life-long passion for comics I share with so many others, that I too, must be a "picto-panel-panepictophile-maniac."

James Cassara, North Carolina

Jeff Gelb Writes!

Loved the Patriotic Heroes-themed issue of CBM #48. There was a point when I attempted to collect an example of every WWII patriotic-themed superhero, and I think I quit somewhere around 20! This was one terrific overview–congratulations to Michelle!

I also wanted to thank Will Murray for answering my question about Ray Cummings' work on Captain America. This was fascinating news–I wonder what other stories Cummings wrote for that or other series. Those two Captain America issues are a really exciting, imaginative read–I'd love to see them reprinted someday, though that's undoubtedly a pipe dream!

CBM is one terrific publication–whether or not I'm in the issue! Keep 'em flying!

Jeff Gelb, California

Kudos for Mick!

I would like to extend my congratulations on another outstanding issue–CBM #47. This is a particularly pleasing issue for us DC Big Five war book collectors and is very much welcomed and appreciated. The expanding and growing interest in this genre of our hobby could not be more deserved when you consider the superior art, storytelling and the masterful cover art presentations that in many issues literally exploded off the cover with combat emotion, tension and intrigue.

I am particularly excited about, and pleased with, Mick Rabin's excellent overview of what makes the DC war universe so compelling and interesting. In just a few short pages he cites example after example detailing interesting and crucial information about the evolution of the DC war book machine and those that made it happen. All I can say is "great job" Mick.

I would also agree with Mick about what makes G.I. Combat #87 such a highly regarded book. To me this issue epitomizes what the whole war book phenomenon is all about and it stands as a monument to that era and also to the artistic talent of the great war book artist, Russ Heath. The color choices on this cover are rousing and stimulating and when combined with the precision formation of aircraft ready and poised to strike, well, the mental imagery commands the viewer to investigate.

Any dialogue or word balloons other than the bold yellow letters of the title on this cover would have certainly detracted from the overall visual impact of this beauty. This is without question a book that deserves a prominent position in any serious collectors portfolio regardless of its highly prized status with war book collectors. I was able to secure a very fine copy of this book at the '96 San Diego Comic Con after a two year hunt, with the much appreciated assistance of Mick Rabin, I might add.

Another of my favorites from this outstanding run of GIC washtone books is #80. This is another Russ Heath masterpiece that can't really be appreciated until you hold it in your hands and let the visual imagery transport you into the raging airborne battle. Again, no word balloons or teaser dialogue, just the page-filled moment of battle (in this case the top turret gunner on a B-25 engaging a German ME-109 fighter) guns blazing inviting the viewer into the lonely world of aerial combat.

It is not an easy book to find in high grade because of its black background similar to the difficulty in finding a high grade copy of ASM #28–the Molten Man issue for the same reasons. It is a much sought after and undervalued book (just like the whole run of GIC washtone issues) that represents the pinnacle of DC war book engineering, and to the collector, a book that if found in high grade, a very satisfying and highly rewarding hunt.

Anyway, thanks again for devoting an issue of CBM to the world of DC war comics. All the related articles and the Russ Heath interview were very well done. The color gallery section highlighting a number of books from each of the five titles is breathtaking! All the best,

Lloyd A. Duff, Nevada

I also think Mick Rabin did a great job with his contributions (many behind the scenes) to CBM #47. Both he and I were very gratified when Russ Heath (at the DC Big-5 War Dinner at the SD Con) indicated that he was both flattered and impressed by the issue.

My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time. Please note that CBM *reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications to:*

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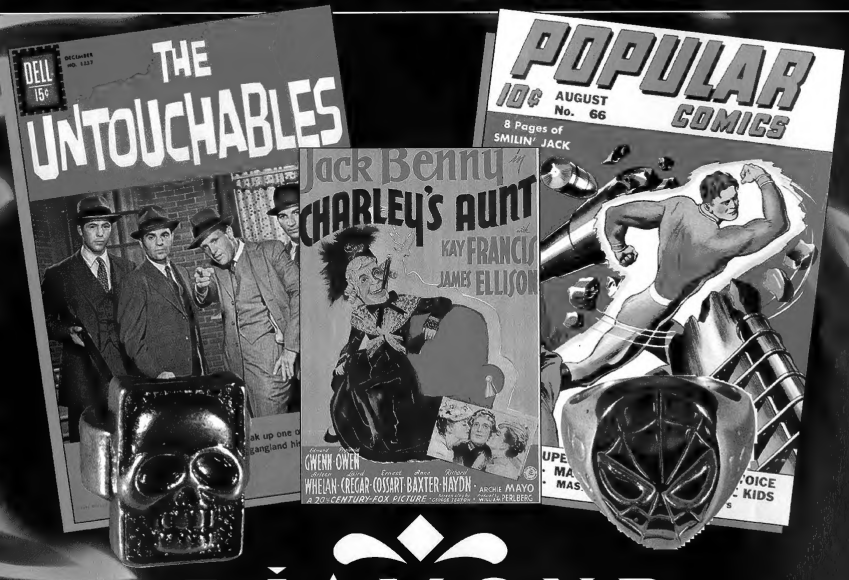

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